

# **TO TELL THE TRUTH**

## **Matthew 5:33-37**

**We ought to be people who are known for our integrity, honesty and truthfulness.**

### **I. WHAT DID THE LAW TEACH?** (33)

#### **A. DO NOT SWEAR FALSELY BUT PERFORM YOUR OATH**

- Christ's was a summary from Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2 and Deut. 23:21-24

#### **B. THE LAW FORBID .....**

1. Profanity: Profaning the name of God by calling Him to verify what was false
2. Perjury: Not fulfilling your word or lying and thereby not performing your oath
3. Passivity: Not fulfilling your vows to the Lord

### **II. WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?** (34-37)

#### **A. JESUS' PRONOUNCEMENT**

1. Do not swear "at all"
2. Jesus did not forbid all oath taking
  - The idea is better translated "do not swear in general"
3. What Jesus did forbid was frivolous or insincere oaths that diluted integrity and increased skepticism

#### **B. JEWISH PRACTICE**

1. The Jews of the day would make rash oaths but in so doing avoid using the sacred name of God.
2. By avoiding the use of God's name they would argue that the oaths were either less binding or not binding at all
3. It became a game of splitting hairs - See Lev. 19:12 and Matt. 23:16-22
4. Ultimately it was a means of being deceptive or dishonest and make gain through loopholes or trickery (i.e.: the fine print)
5. The idea that oaths were even necessary should have led people to think that the oath taker was not honest or at least not consistently honest - See Prov. 10:19

#### **C. JESUS' POINT** (34-36)

- All oaths ultimately imply an appeal to God

**D. OUR PROBE**

- How do we know what exceptions Jesus' pronouncement against oaths allows?
- 1. Consider the context: Jesus is dealing with flippant or rash oaths
- 2. Consider Old Testament teaching - Deut.10:20 allowed oaths to be given
- 3. Consider some examples of taking oaths:
  - a. God in Lk.1:70-73; Acts 2:29-31 and Hebrews 6:16-17
  - b. Jesus being put under oath in Mt.26:63-64
  - c. Paul swearing with "God as his witness" in Rom.1:9, II Cor.1:23, Gal. 1:20 and I Thess.2:5, 10
- 4. Exceptions to Jesus' command might include:
  - a. Marriage vows
  - b. Swearing to tell the truth in court - See Hebrews 6:16
  - c. Swearing allegiance to one's country
  - d. An oath of office or military duty
  - e. None of these are a flippant disregard for God or an attempt to play with words for the purpose of deceit or advantage

**E. OUR PRIORITY (37a)**

- 1. Be Honest - Psalm 51:6 "God desires truth in the inward parts"
- 2. Be Trustworthy: Your "yes" means "yes" and your "no" means "no"
- 3. Be Wise: Avoid foolish vows - See Josh. 9:15, Judges 11:30-21, Matt. 14:7 and Acts 21:23-26

**F. OUR PARTNERSHIP**

- All falsehood and deceptive dealings come from "the evil one" - See John 8:44

**IV. HOW CAN WE APPLY THIS TEACHING?****A. SHOULD WE EXPECT AN OATH?**

- 1. The Situation: Do we expect an oath from someone with whom we do business?
- 2. Some Suggestions
  - a. If possible, don't do business with a person you do not know or cannot trust
  - b. Investigate a person's character before doing business
  - c. Accept the loss if he does deceive you - See I Cor. 6:7
  - d. To require more than his word from an honest man is to insult his honor

**B. SHOULD YOU SWEAR OR TAKE AN OATH?**

- 1. Develop a reputation for trustworthiness
- 2. Always deal honestly with people
- 3. When something goes wrong - make it right!
- 4. Develop character and people may not ask you to swear
- 5. In court relationships realize that you are dealing with people who do not know you and to swear to telling the truth is not an unreasonable request
- 6. Marriage vows and civil and military service are serious matters and should be entered into seriously. Taking a vow or oath is not wrong in these matters

**CONCLUSION: COMMIT TO TELL THE TRUTH!**

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