

Speak Truthfully Matthew 5:33–37

Better Speech

Do I speak truthfully?

Jesus sets another high standard for His disciples

As earlier lessons, we are called to exceed standard of scribes and pharisees, and individuals today

From Tradition

Emphasis shifted from truthfulness to honoring only vows sworn "*to the Lord*" - **Matthew 5:34–36**

In application, only vows "*to the lord*" were binding - **Matthew 23:16–22**

Because of this distinction, daily conversations often spiced with meaningless oaths to make impressions: "I swear by heaven; by the throne of God; by the earth; by Jerusalem; by the altar; by the temple; by my head"

By shifting emphasis from truthfulness to honoring only vows made to Lord, Pharisees justified meaningless vows.

This attitude is hypocritical and showy yet misses the point of God's instruction throughout history

From The Law

Passages making clear what law teaches - **Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2**

The emphasis was on truthfulness and faithfulness

One must be truthful when swearing an oath; truly mean it

Must faithfully keep the oath; he must carry out his word

Emphasis on truthfulness "*in the heart*" stressed by Psalms and prophets - **Psalms 15:1–2; 24:3–4;**

Proverbs 6:17; Proverbs 12:22; Jeremiah 5:1–2; Hosea 4:1–2

Vows to Lord should be kept, and truthfulness in all things was expected.

From Jesus

He exposed the hypocrisy of arbitrary distinctions:

When swear by "*the temple*"; "*the throne of God*"; he swears by LORD - **Matthew 23:20–22**

One cannot swear by these without involving God:

Heaven is God's throne; Earth His footstool; Only God can change hair color, therefore, any oath is an oath "*to the Lord*"! - **Matthew 5:34–36**

He enjoined "*truthfulness in the heart*": your "*yes*" mean "*yes*"; your "*no*" mean "*no*" - **Psalms 15:1–2**

Oaths were never intended to heighten the swearer's obligation to speak truth but to give greater assurance to those who received them - **Hebrews 6:13–18**

Judicial Matters

Jesus and James qualified their statements concerning oaths

Refer to flippant, hypocritical oaths commonly voiced - **Matthew 5:34–36; James 5:12**

Also, consider the following points:

God has sworn an oath to us - **Hebrews 6:16–18**

Jesus was willing to answer under oath before the Sanhedrin court - **Matthew 26:63–64**

An angel of God swore an oath - **Revelation 10:5–7**

Paul made solemn oaths - **Romans 1:9; 2Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20**

When we consider all of Scripture it seems Jesus and James condemn hypocritical oaths used to make impressions or spice up daily conversations but were never intended to be kept

Solemn oaths made in judicial circumstances; those oaths on occasions of solemn religious importance (as in the case of Paul) are not part of this group

Some see a "safe" course in avoiding the word "swear" and using a phrase like "confidently affirm" but I am convinced there is no real difference in the two when we look at intent.

Of course, as in many things, each must make their own decision based on study

Righteously Exceeding

Clearly Jesus expects His followers to hold themselves to a higher standard of service than that shown by the Scribes and Pharisees

Christians are to be so truthful and trustworthy it is unnecessary for them to swear oaths or have to say "I promise" in order to be trusted

We serve a God who cannot lie - **Titus 2:1**

We must be honest and truthful - **Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:15,25**

Do our speech and actions agree with one another?

Do others know that I Speak Truthfully?

JLH/EO