

## Matthew 5:33-37

### Introduction

#### I. Matthew 5:33

##### A. Old Testament background

1. In the ancient world, an oath was when you would invoke or call upon a higher power (usually a deity or something related to the deity) as a \_\_\_\_\_ to your words (Heb. 6:16).
2. The significance of calling upon a higher power as a witness to my words is that if I prove unfaithful to my word, then I am calling upon the deity to \_\_\_\_\_ me (2 Sam. 19:13; 2 Kings 6:31).
3. The reason for calling upon a higher power as a witness to your words was to provide a binding \_\_\_\_\_ of your intentions, truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity.
  - a. 2 Kings 2:6 – Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But [Elisha] said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on.
  - b. 1 Samuel 20:3 – But David vowed again, saying, “Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he thinks, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.’ But truly, as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.”
  - c. 2 Samuel 3:35 – David swore, saying, “God do so to me and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!”
  - d. 2 Kings 6:31 – [Joram] said, “May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today.”
  - e. 1 Samuel 28:10 – But Saul swore to her [the medium] by the LORD, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.”
  - f. Jeremiah 38:16 – Then King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah, “As the LORD lives, who made our souls, I will not put you to death or deliver you into the hand of these men who seek your life.”
4. In the Old Testament (and even in the NT) oaths are clearly portrayed as a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ thing, and even commanded by God (Exodus 22:10-11; Numbers 5:21).
  - a. Genesis 14:22-23 – But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “**I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth,** that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours.”

- b. Ruth 1:16-17 – But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. **May the LORD do so to me and more also** if anything but death parts me from you.”
- c. Ruth 3:13 – Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, **as the LORD lives**, I will redeem you.
- d. Psalm 63:11 – But the king shall rejoice in God; **all who swear by him shall exult**, for the mouths of liars will be stopped.
- e. Deuteronomy 10:20 (cf. 6:13) – You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and **by his name you shall swear**.
- f. Isaiah 65:16 – So that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and **he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth**; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my eyes.
- g. Jeremiah 12:16 – And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, **to swear by my name, “As the LORD lives,”** even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people.
- h. Genesis 22:16 – **By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord**, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son...
- i. Psalm 132:11 – **The LORD swore to David a sure oath** from which he will not turn back: “One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.”
- j. Isaiah 45:23 – **By myself I have sworn**; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.”
- k. Numbers 14:21 – **As I live**, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.
- l. Isaiah 62:8 – **The Lord has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm**, “I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies; nor will foreigners drink your new wine for which you have labored.”
- m. Jeremiah 44:26 – “**Behold, I have sworn by My great name**,” says the Lord, “never shall My name be invoked again by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, “As the Lord God lives.”
- n. Ezekiel 33:11 – “**As I live!**” **declares the Lord God**, “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.”
- o. Amos 4:2 – **The Lord God has sworn by His holiness**, “Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks.”
- p. Revelation 10:5-6 – Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and **swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it**, that there will be delay no longer.”

- q. Romans 1:9 – For **God**, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, **is my witness** as to how unceasingly I make mention of you.
  - r. 2 Corinthians 1:23 – But **I call God as witness to my soul**, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.
  - s. 2 Corinthians 11:11 – Why? Because I do not love you? **God knows I do!**
  - t. Galatians 1:20 – Now in what I am writing to you, **I assure you before God that I am not lying.**
  - u. Philippians 1:8 – For **God is my witness**, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
  - v. 1 Thessalonians 2:5 – For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—**God is witness.**
  - w. 1 Thessalonians 5:27 – **I put you under oath before the Lord** to have this letter read to all the brothers.
5. The Old Testament sought to protect the sacredness of the oath as the guardian and seal of the \_\_\_\_\_ (cf. Matthew 5:33).
- a. Numbers 30:2 – If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, *he shall not break his word*. He shall *do* according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.
  - b. Leviticus 19:12 – You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.
  - c. Exodus 20:7 – You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

B. “Relaxing” the Law

1. The oath was to be a seal and confirmation of the truth that was \_\_\_\_\_ expected (with or without an oath).
2. But the Pharisees reasoned this way: If the main problem with swearing falsely is that it profanes God’s name (Lev. 19:12), then we’ll just swear \_\_\_\_\_ using God’s name!
3. Matthew 23:16, 18 – Woe to you, blind guides, who say, “If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.” ... And you say, “If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.”
4. The end result: Oath taking became more often a \_\_\_\_\_ for deceit than a sign and seal of the truth!

II. Matthew 5:34-36 – Surpassing the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Part I)

- A. If you swear by heaven, then you are swearing by \_\_\_\_\_ because heaven is the throne of God.
- B. If you swear by earth, then you are swearing by \_\_\_\_\_ because earth is the footstool of God’s feet.
  - ✓ Isaiah 66:1 – Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?

- C. If you swear by Jerusalem, then you are swearing by \_\_\_\_\_ because Jerusalem is the city of the great King.
  - ✓ Psalm 48:1-2 – His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.
- D. If you swear by your head (your \_\_\_\_\_), then you are swearing by \_\_\_\_\_ because it is God who determines when our hair changes from black (youth) to white (old age) and directs the course of our entire lives.
- E. No matter what the formula, all oaths are \_\_\_\_\_ binding.

### III. Matthew 5:34, 37 – Surpassing the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Part II)

- A. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the oath of His day in so far as it had become a cover for lies and deceit (“comes from evil”).
- B. When Jesus calls us to a simple “yes” or “no”, the point is that a simple “yes” and “no” is *just as* \_\_\_\_\_ upon us as a \_\_\_\_\_ in the name of the LORD (cf. Matthew 12:36)!

### Conclusion

- A. Ultimately, Jesus is not so much outlawing oaths as He is all \_\_\_\_\_.
  1. Compare the OT perspective on oaths (see above) versus the OT perspective on divorce/remarriage, adultery/lust, and murder/anger.
  2. Note the use of oaths by Paul (see above).
  3. Jesus Himself made a sworn statement under oath (Matthew 26:63-64).
  4. Note the angel’s oath in Revelation 10:5-6.
  5. God Himself has committed Himself to us by means of an oath (see above).
  6. In all of these cases, the point of the oath is not to leave room for deceit, but to emphasize and attest to the \_\_\_\_\_ integrity of the speaker in \_\_\_\_\_ of his words.
  7. Hebrews 6:13-19 – For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.” And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, *desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.* This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.
- B. What’s the big deal about honesty and truthfulness?
  1. All lies and deceit are ultimately from \_\_\_\_\_ himself (cf. Mat. 5:37).
    - a. John 8:44 – You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to

do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- b. Revelation 12:9 – And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.
  - c. Cf. Mark 7:20-23; Romans 1:29; 1 Timothy 1:9-10
2. God is \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. John 3:33 – Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.
  - b. Numbers 23:19 – God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?
  - c. John 14:6 – Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
  - d. Hebrews 6:18 (cf. Titus 1:2) – It is impossible for God to lie.
3. God \_\_\_\_\_ everything that is not of the truth.
- a. Proverbs 6:16-19 – There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.
  - b. Revelation 21:8 – But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.
  - c. Psalm 63:11; Proverbs 19:5; Proverbs 19:9; Proverbs 19:22
4. True \_\_\_\_\_ is pictured in the Bible as the complete absence of lies and deceit.
- a. Zephaniah 3:13 – Those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue.
  - b. John 1:47 – Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”
  - c. 1 Peter 2:22 – [Jesus] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.
  - d. Revelation 14:5 – And in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.
5. A person of truth will have great \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Psalm 34:12-13 – What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.
  - b. Psalm 15:1-2, 4 – O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart... in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change.

C. The Gospel

1. Jesus requires that we treat all of our words and statements as if they were an \_\_\_\_\_ before God Himself.
2. Judged by this standard, we \_\_\_\_\_ stand condemned.
3. 1 Peter 2:22 – [Jesus] committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.
4. ***In Christ, who bore the curse that all liars deserve, we have no condemnation!***

D. Exhortation

1. *Therefore*, we can \_\_\_\_\_ obey Jesus and strive to be people *of the truth!*
  
2. Ephesians 4:25 (cf. Col. 3:9) – Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor.

**Teaching our Children**

**Q.** What do people do when they take an oath (what is an oath)?

A. An oath is when a person calls God to listen as a *witness* to what he is saying.

**Q.** In an oath, what is the special meaning of calling God as a witness to our words?

A. We are inviting God to curse and judge us if we are not telling the truth or if we do not keep our word.

**Q.** What was the purpose of an oath (why would people take an oath)?

A. The purpose of an oath was to guard the *truth*. People would take oaths to prove their *truthfulness*.

**Q.** Whenever someone broke an oath or swore falsely, which commandment did this break?

A. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

**Q.** The Pharisees tried to be very careful not to take God's name in vain. So what did they do so that they could still swear falsely (break their word / not tell the truth)?

A. The Pharisees made oaths without actually using God's name. Instead, they would swear by heaven, the earth, Jerusalem, or their own life.

**Q.** Can you explain why Jesus could say that swearing by all of these things was still really swearing by God?

A. See II. above.

**Q.** Jesus said that instead of oaths, we should just stick to a simple what?

A. "Yes" or "no"

**Q.** Jesus is saying that in God's sight, even a simple "yes" or "no" is just as serious as what?

A. A "yes" or a "no" is just as serious in God's sight as if we swore an oath in His Name!

**Q.** Have you treated *all* of your words as if they were *all* an oath sworn in God's name?

A. No! Reflect on the ways that we don't keep our word and on the ways that we are deceitful. Lead your children to glory in Christ and His cross (the Gospel)! (See Conclusion; C.)

~ Reflect on the five truths and their corresponding Scriptures under Conclusion; B.

~ Exhort your children to obey King Jesus and be people of the *truth!*