

CHRISTIANS SHOULD SAY WHAT THEY MEAN
AND MEAN WHAT THEY SAY!
MATT CH5:33-37

ILLUSTRATION

In the film “A few Good Men”, Tom Cruise plays a military trial lawyer (solicitor) who never goes to Court but plea bargains for his clients, until he takes a case where a marine is killed and two marines are charged with murder. Towards the end of the film there is this incredible climax, where Cruise chooses, in pursuit of the truth challenges a senior ranking marine officer to tell the truth, and there is this exchange between them, that goes something like this “I want the truth” and the response “you can't handle the truth”.

The true reality is, that what we say matters, therefore words matter! What we say matters to God

DO NOT BREAK YOUR OATH! V33

What is an oath? Where did oaths come from? Why do we need oaths? Is an oath a good thing or bad? Where does God stand with oaths?

Time and time again in the Old Testament we see that God insisted that oaths be kept and honoured!

Leviticus Ch19:12 “Do not swear by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.”

Numbers Ch30:2 “When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”

Deuteronomy Ch23:21 “If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.”

There is always a need for honesty in speech and so God's Law prohibited false testimony or false swearing or perjury (deliberately giving false witness)

DO NOT SWEAR AT ALL! V34

Jesus challenges this practice of giving false vows!

In Jesus' time the scribes had devised a variety of so called “escape clauses” from binding oaths. For example any oaths which succeeded in avoiding vow

in “the name of the Lord” were seen as not absolutely binding! And so people were literally getting away with not keeping their word!

A.M. Hunter puts it like this “Oaths arise because men are so often liars” (John Stotts Book on The Sermon on the Mount pg102).

DO LET YOUR YES BE YES AND YOUR NO NO! V37

What Jesus emphasises in His teaching in these verses, is that, honest people do not need to resort to oaths! It is not that they should refuse to take an oath if asked, especially by some external authority, in Court for example, but that honest people can just say “yes or no”.

Oath taking can fall into a pathetic confession of covering our own dishonesty.

What do we hear in our culture? I swear on my mother's life, or I swear on my child's life. Or this is Gospel! This is the Gospel truth!

APPLICATION

Words are powerful, because they are meant to be powerful! It is how we communicate truth! Honesty in speech is how we are meant to proclaim and declare the Gospel!

Jesus' disciples must be people of integrity. A person of integrity is someone who in daily conversation is so truthful, dependable, genuine and reliable, that his or her words are believed without an oath!

The following men were burned alive at the stake, for “saying what they mean and meaning what they say”, Rev John Rogers 4th February 1555, Rev Laurence Saunders 8th February 1555, Bishop John Hooper 9th February 1555, Dr Rowland Taylor 9th February 1555, William Hunter (only 19 years old) 26th March 1555, Bishop Robert Farrar 30th March 1555, Chaplain to King Edward 6th, John Bradford 1st July 1555 and John Leaf bound to the same stake.

It is said that of some of those burnt at the stake that they were burnt alive for believing the Gospel and claiming that it is “By Grace alone”!

Have we fallen into the trap of making oaths to cover up our own dishonesty?

How can we develop the discipline of allowing our “yes” to be “yes” and our “no” to be “no”?

Why do we sometimes have difficulty in saying just “yes” or “no”?