

Authentic Christianity Part 6: Show Your Integrity

June 25, 2023

Matthew 5:33-37

This series causes us to examine our loyalty to Christ and the genuineness of salvation and humble obedience. Genuine believers are characterized by honesty and integrity because of the nature of the New Covenant because now the Holy Spirit dwells in believers.

Jesus references ancient times so the sermon will look at three time periods:

1) **Ancient Israel:** 3500 years ago, Moses gave commands concerning oaths and vows. 1) Lev. 19:12, "you shall not swear by My name falsely." 2) Deut. 23:21-23, "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it." Why did God make laws focusing on keeping an oath or vow? A vow: is a vertical promise between you and God usually in prayer, in times of distress or trouble, Jud. 11:30. An oath is a horizontal promise between others, Gen. 26:26-29. The similarity between a vow and oath is they both invoke the name or things of God as a witness against them. God is the covenant keeper and so we say that our word will be as good as God's. Oaths and vows were a normal part of Jewish life, Num. 30:2. There were negative consequences or curses applied to a vow or oath that would be a sign that we broke our word in a matter, Exodus 20:7, 1 Kings 8:31, Eccl. 5:4. There were involuntary vows such as Samuel, John the Baptist, and Samson. There were war vows, Num. 21:2; vows for a safe return, Gen. 28:20-22, Jonah 1 & 2; Requests for family, 1 Sam. 1,2; most common were free will offerings for the tabernacle (Ex. 35:21, 29) and the temple (1 Chron. 29:6). There were blessings for keeping vows.

2) **Israel in the Time of Christ:** Matt. 23:16-22, Jesus was calling out the wickedness of Jewish leaders who were making exceptions even though they sounded righteous and acted as if they were law-keepers. Jesus reveals in v20-22 that those oaths were heard by the Lord and are valid against them, revealing they are wicked liars. Everything that we do, we do before God. It was impossible to keep up with the legalism and loopholes that Jewish leaders had created for themselves. Matt. 5:33-37 elevates the words that a believer speaks as one before and as unto the Lord. We are not in control (V36) and we serve Christ who keeps His word, and so should we (V37).

>>Why the shift from rules and laws to keeping our word in the New Covenant? Because the believer is now indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We are compelled to keep our word, everything else is of the evil one (V37).

3) **In Our Time Now:** God disciplines those with a lack of integrity and gross hypocrisy. In the New Covenant everything I say is as before God. What about these scenarios? 1) Is Jesus saying pledge cards are wrong? No. 2 Cor. 9, we give generously, we give as we have been prospered, and are able to amend or change as needed. 2) What about a legal oath? The New Covenant is a higher standard of speaking truth. 3) Marriage vows? Why do I stay faithful to my spouse? Because I am a redeemed sinner who keeps my word to love and honor my Lord.

>What giving an oath does not mean: that we can't disappoint others (Lev. 5:4) when a vow can't be kept even with the best intentions. The principle of integrity is that a person doesn't always have a reason to get out of keeping their word. The untrustworthy person should examine their heart. **It does mean** that my life is a pattern of keeping my word, a walk with the Lord that my word and commitments matter, Pro. 3:27-30. We ask for forgiveness when we give an oath rashly but always endeavor to keep our word.

God swore by His own name to keep His oath to Abraham, Heb. 6:13-19.

Further Discussion and Application

How does the believer show a changed heart when they only promise and commit to things that they intend to follow through with and complete? Think of things that you haven't committed to and rightfully so. Why didn't you give your word? Why didn't you feel comfortable in giving your word?

Why should we not delay in keeping our word and oaths? Why does showing urgency demonstrate a desire to fulfill the promises we make? Why should we avoid making promises that are months or years down the road? What usually happens to those promises?

The believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. How is the life of a believer characterized by integrity? How is integrity expressed in our homes, in our work life, and in our relationships with unbelievers and believers? What should be a hallmark of those who are believers in Christ with regards to integrity? Give some examples.

What is the proper way to make promises and oaths to our children and spouse? How can we be sure that we are being Christlike in our commitments to family and in other relationships? Where does our confidence to keep our word come from? Why can we commit to keeping our word in our jobs, with our spouses, etc. and not so with other things outside of those core relationships in life?

What are some ways that we should be bolder to give our word and keep it? What types of things should we commit more to?

This sermon should reveal to us whether or not we have integrity or need to show more integrity. What did the Lord reveal to you through this sermon?