

SERMON-BASED STUDY: THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

Matthew 5:33-37, ESV – ³³“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

Notes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week’s teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

ENGAGE WITH THE MESSAGE

- 1 This week we were reminded of the importance of being committed to speaking truthfully. Why is this important in regards to our testimony to others?
- 2 Other than simply sin nature, why do people practice lying?
- 3 How can believers practice radical truthfulness in a world of deception?

DIGGING DEEPER

A **Deuteronomy 10:20, ESV** – ²⁰ You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23, ESV – ²¹ “If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. ²² But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. ²³ You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-6, ESV – ⁴ When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

4 According to the passages above, what did the Old Testament teach about taking oaths?

5 What does it mean to “have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth”? Why is it important to guard what we say?

6 How does our “mouth lead us into sin”? How can we avoid this trap?

B **Matthew 23:16-22, ESV** – ¹⁶ “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.’ ¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸ 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.’ ¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹ And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. ²² And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

James 5:12, ESV – ¹² But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

7 Looking at Matthew 23:16-22, how were the Pharisees taking advantage of the fact that many people were not “in the know” about which oaths were supposedly binding? How might this behavior happen today?

8 What is James, and Jesus in Matthew 5:37, challenging believers to do? How is this radically different from the behavior of the Pharisees?

9 James 5:12 concludes with the statement, “so that you may not fall under condemnation.” What does James mean by this statement? How does this affect the way you speak?

TAKING IT HOME

Jesus reminds us that believers are to practice radical truthfulness. Jesus is not against oaths, but He is against the abuse and misuse of oaths. Instead, He wants people to simply speak the truth. How are you at being a radical truth speaker? Are there areas of your life where it is harder to speak truth (home, work, around certain friends or people)? Share with your accountability partner what God has been showing you. Pray for one another as you seek to be people that practice radical truthfulness.

PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUEST

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FOR FURTHER STUDY

Leviticus 19:12
Numbers 30:2
Proverbs 10:19
Jeremiah 12:16