

## 03 August 2025 - Truth Vows

### Introduction

Mankind has an inclination to lie leading to people mistrusting people.

What marks this world system and those in the kingdom of Satan is a credibility issue.

Satan is the father of lies, and his followers reflect this characteristic. - John 8:44

TV, movies, music, advertising, fantasy and now AI mix truth with falsehood in a soup that as people drink it leading to ponds of relativity and lack of credibility.

Even many preachers are suspected.

We live in a society of manufactured truth.

People cheat, exaggerate, break their contracts, promises, vows, misrepresent their tax deductions, betray confidants and see it as normal part of life.

But even in the most corrupt society, there are times that real truth is needed.

- Courts of law require witnesses to tell the truth.
- Perjury is a crime.

Even gangs and criminals whose trade involves lying demand truth among themselves.

People are inclined to truth when it benefits them.

This morning God's word x-rays the truthfulness of your heart, your words and actions.

God is the truth, and you were designed to reflect this characteristic.

### Historical Background

In Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus, takes six important Old Testament Scriptural commands and fulfills/ completes them.

- by bringing greater understanding and by explaining its full dimensions.

#### Jesus Does This for Six Commands:

1. Murder vs 21-26
2. Adultery vs 27-30
3. Divorce vs 31-32 (what we're looking at today)
4. Making false vows vs 33-37
5. Vengeance vs 38-42
6. Hating your enemies vs 43-48

These commands reveal how your righteousness needs to be far superior than the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20), in fact it needs to be perfect (Matthew 5:48) to enter God's kingdom.

This morning, we look at the issue of making vows. vs 33-37

## Passage

*Matthew 5:33–37 LSB*

*“Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’*

*“But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.*

*“Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.*

*“But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of the evil one.*

## Proposition

### 3 Ways Believers Become More Credible:

1. Remember to keep your vows - vv33
2. Refrain from false vows - vv34-36
3. Rather practice integrity - vv37

### 1. 1.Remember keeping your vows - vv33

*Matthew 5:33 LSB*

*Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.*

“Again” (once again, returning to a former position) is in the emphatic position, emphasizing Jesus’s return to the Scriptures, exposing the guilt of Jews and their spiritual leaders.

“You have heard” implies the readers were familiar with these commands.

The Ancients again refer to the generation that received the commandments from God at Mt Sinai and the 2nd generation that was about to enter the promised land.

The two commands have a timeless, universal force to it.

The negative command:

**“You shall not make false vows”**

or the positive command

**“But shall fulfill your vows to the Lord”** are not direct quotations from the Old Testament.

It’s a summary of those commands:

Commands like:

*Leviticus 19:12 LSB*

*‘And you shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God: I am Yahweh.*

*Exodus 20:7 LSB*

*“You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.*

*Numbers 30:3 LSB*

*“Also, if a woman makes a vow to Yahweh and binds herself by an obligation in her father’s house in her youth,*

*Deuteronomy 23:22 LSB*

*“However, if you refrain from vowing, it will not be a sin in you.*

As we dive into the passage, it helps to understand the English terms:

To promise means to affirm you will do something.

To make a vow is to make a sacred promise in front of witnesses and invoking a deity’s punishment if you failed to keep it.

An Oath is similar to vowing and making a covenant.

In Israel culture:

The opposite of an oath was a curse.

- The oath was a pledge towards covenant fidelity
- The curse was the result when the pledge was broken.

The oath was the glue or the emblem of the righteous person commitment to maintain faith with God and an Israelites determination to keep Yahweh’s covenant.

Oaths were associated with serving God and trusting God.

When Gentiles turned away from their idols, it was portrayed as an oath of allegiance to God. False oaths robbed Yahweh of His honor and was viewed as stealing His honor.

The oath involved a pledge to do something while calling upon God or a sacred object as a witness.

It highlighted three things:

Looking at the text

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***YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS  
TO THE LORD.’***

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The grammar reveals it is a future with imperatival force. Meaning it’s like a command.

Key terms here:

False vow =epiorkeo= a perjured person, to swear falsely, not fulfill your oath, BDAG = to swear something is true when one knows it is false, or to fail to do what one has promised under oath, MOUNCE = to swear falsely SENSE = to knowingly tell an untruth while swearing an oath.

But contrast making a false vow with keeping your vow.

Fulfill=apodidomi = to give, or to do something, to keep or perform your vows

Vow =horkou =an oath, what is promised with an oath, MOUNCE = that which is solemnly promised, a vow, to swear SENSE =slemn promise usually invoking a divine eyewitness, regarding your future act or behavior, often including penalties for failure within the contents of the oath.

The origin of horkou comes from the idea of an enclosure, like a fence, or to bind together.  
(Macarthur)

The truth or pledge of an oath is enclosed, bound and strengthened by that which is invoked on its behalf. The name of something or someone greater than the person making the oath was invoked to give greater credibility to what was said.

*Hebrews 6:16 LSB*  
*For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.*

Oath calling invited Yahweh to be a witness to the truthfulness of what was being said. It was generally taken to be the absolute truth, which would end a dispute, because it invited judgment on the one that violated his word.

A commentator described oath making as

... joining of words of promise or assertion with something or someone of considerable significance. By means of the association the reliability of the words is in some way thought to be buttressed ... (NIGTC)

Another theologian stated

**Trinity Journal Volume 16 Oath-Taking in The Community of The New Age (Matthew 5:33–37)**

*An “oath” (or “vow”) as used in the Hebrew Scriptures, may be called “a sworn affirmation or an invocation of God in confirmation of a promise.” It is a solemn appeal to God to confirm the truth of one’s words, with the express acceptance of punishment in case one fails to speak the truth*

Society demands oaths in some situations.

Like:

The Marriage vow calls God and people to witness that you will love and cherish your mate as long as you live, and you’re recognizing the special sanctity God places on marriage.

The court of law when being a witness.

If Ancient Israel oaths were used in judicial situations in civil cases, never in criminal cases and in litigation concerning private immovable property.

It was used when there was no evidence or insufficient evidence.

God was then called to be the witness, since there was no other witness. Breaking your oath made you liable to God.

Oaths were also used outside of judicial situations and were called

- Extrajudicial oaths (these were applied in private lives of a person, not for judicial purposes.)  
The Old Testament provides several situations in which men made oaths.
- Abraham made an oath to the King of Sodom that he would not take any of his stuff.  
Genesis 14:22-24
- He made one with Abimelech promising not to deal falsely with him  
Genesis 21:23-24
- Jacob and Laban made a covenant promising not to cause harm to each other.

Genesis 31:44-53

- David and Jonathan vowed not to cut off showing loving kindness to the house of Jonathan.  
1 Samuel 20:16

God made oaths:

God vowed by Himself to greatly bless Abraham and his descendants.  
Genesis 22:16-17

God also made oaths that were called Covenants.

- Noahic covenant - Genesis 9:9-17
- Abrahamic covenant - Genesis 15:18
- Mosaic covenant - Exodus 19:5-24:8
- Pharisaic covenant - Numbers 25
- Davidic covenant - 1 Samuel 7:8-17
- New covenant - Jeremiah 31:27-34

God relates to His people through Covenant.

So, Jesus recalled what was a common practice of oath making which served to guarantee the truthfulness of whatever was agreed upon.

As a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, Israel had to be truth speakers and thus oath keepers.

What they vowed, they had to keep.

The principle underscoring oaths/vows is **truth keeping**.

What you promised, you keep.

What you vowed, you fulfilled.

What you say you do

However, an oath is as reliable as the one who makes it.

The bible reveals examples of people who made false vows.

- Peter denied that he knew Jesus by an oath. - Matthew 26:69-74
- Samsung broke his vows.

The Bible also reveals people making foolish vows.

- Jephthah made a foolish vow that led to the death of his own daughter  
Judges 11:30-31
- Saul made a foolish vow which caused his army to be weakened  
1 Samuel 14:24

God does not want people making false or foolish vows.

Gods' prescription for vow making.

Make it in His name.

*Deuteronomy 6:13 LSB*

*"Yahweh your God you shall fear; and Him you shall serve; and by His name you shall swear.*

Note that whatever you are swearing by, means your swearing by the God of truth.

*Isaiah 65:16 LSB*

*Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth, and he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth; Because the former distresses are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My sight!*

There is a place for making vows in serious situations, but God is serious about you keeping your vows.

*Joshua 9:20 LSB*

*"This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them."*

## **Application**

Just think about it, how serious are you about the vows you have made?

Are you keeping your marriage vows?

Do you even remember them?

Are you keeping the WBC membership covenant?

You may think little of it, yet these are things you promise to do as a member of God's body.

I want you to on your own time go back and reflect on what you commit to if you're a member of Christ body here at WBC

**GO and read it again**

Ask yourself how much of this are you applying?

These are all biblical instructions.

Have you made vows you did not keep?

Repent of that and choose to keep your vows.

AS believer you commanded to put off falsehood and to speak the truth.

*Ephesians 4:25 LSB*

*Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth to each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*

As a believer you should be characterized as a person who keeps their word. Do people look at you and say, he or she is a man or women of their word? Would they call you a person of integrity or a person who is not trustworthy? Pray David's prayer.

*Psalms 139:23–24 LSB*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way.*

Confess and repent anything sinful that the HS reveals to you with regards to you not operating in truth, not keeping your vows, your promises, your commitments to the Lord.

Jesus then confronted people making false.

## 2. Refrain from false vows vs 34-36

*Matthew 5:34–36 LSB*

*“But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.*

*“Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.*

*“But I say to you, make no oath at all,*

The terms at all is the Greek term holos, =whole, altogether BDAG = highest degree, completely, holy, in the slightest degree.

Many groups like the Anabaptist and Jehovah Witnesses took this verse as bases for refusing to give an oath in court.

Calvin said that men adopted the false notion that every kind of oath was condemned by Christ.

Had Jesus banned all oaths, He would have:

- Banned Marriage vows
- Contradict his own word, not to fulfill the law.
- sinned when He himself responded under oath. (Matthew 26)
- sinned by stating truly truly

And Paul would have sinned when he made a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18)

So, what was Jesus saying?

What is the scope of this command?

The grammar helps us here.

The object of the oaths that Jesus was talking about is revealed with the next statements.

What are all the oaths Christ not permit?

The oath in which you were invoking things like heaven, earth, Jerusalem and your head as witness to what you were stating as true yet using it to not be truthful.

Vs 34b-37 reveals the scope of what Jesus meant.

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**either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,  
or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem,  
for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.  
“Nor shall you make an oath by your head,  
for you cannot make one hair white or black.**

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For each of the statements a reason is given.

Don't invoke (call upon, appeal to)

- Heaven = the throne of God
- Earth is His footstool
- Jerusalem is the city of the great king
- You cannot make one hair white or black.

Why not?

Jesus' argument is that whatever you call upon as your witness in the oath is in some way related to God. Since God is the Creator, He is the owner of Heaven, earth, Jerusalem and every head. Swearing by these things implied ultimately to swearing by God or in relation to God.

The problem

When you use what belongs to God as witness to your dishonest, deceitful and insincere promises or vows, your implicating God in your dishonest dealings.

Philo (a Hellenistic Jew who lived in Alexandria in Egypt between 20BC and 50 AD) said the following:

when I swear falsely 'I take Thee [God] as a cloak for my wrongdoing. I am ashamed to appear a sinner, be Thou my accomplice'. ... in swearing by something we appear to be making that by which we swear responsible or answerable for our conduct. (Philo)

The Bible warns you.

*Exodus 20:7 LSB*

*"You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.*

Making an oath is implicitly in God's name and are designed to encourage truthfulness, not deceit.

The governing principle behind making a vow is pursuing the truth, not falsehood.

But the Jews and religious leaders were inventing ways, to circumvent the law, clear their guilt while practicing lies and deceit.

The Jews believed that unless the name of Yahweh is mentioned in an oath, it was not binding.

The command

*Leviticus 19:12 LSB*

*'And you shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God: I am Yahweh.*

was interpreted that you could swear falsely by any other name.

Honest mandatory vows were limited to those in His name

False vows were acceptable if in anything other than God's name.

Jesus would later rebuke the religious leaders for their shenanigans.

They manipulated making oaths to the point that these vows meant nothing.

*Matthew 23:16–22 LSB*

*“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the sanctuary, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is obligated.’*

*“You fools and blind men! For which is more important, the gold or the sanctuary that sanctified the gold?*

*“And ‘Whoever swears by the altar, **that** is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’*

*“You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?*

*“Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it.*

*“And whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears both by the sanctuary and by Him who dwells within it.*

*“And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.*

**Calvin stated:**

***Christ, therefore, meant nothing more than this, that all oaths are unlawful,***

which in any way abuse and profane the sacred name of God, for which they ought to have had the effect of producing a deeper reverence.

Essentially Jesus was demanding his disciples to refrain from a perversion of making oaths for dishonest purposes:

- Instead of oaths marking integrity, it marked deceit.
- Instead of confirming truth, it was making lies.
- Instead of upholding God’s standards, it lowered them.

Every oath either honors or dishonors God.

Everything you do, should bring God glory.

God delights in truth.

*Psalm 51:6 LSB*

*Behold, you delight in truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.*

God hates a lying tongue.

*Proverbs 6:16–17 LSB*

*There are six things which Yahweh hates, even seven which are an abomination to Him:  
Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,*

God is holy.

His kingdom is holy.

His people are to be a holy people.

Anything beyond that is evil.

## **Application**

Have you made foolish vows? Humble yourself

Repent and either keep your foolish vow or repent of having made a foolish vow and ask God to release you of your foolish vow.

God is not interested in binding you to a foolish vow,  
God however wants you to repent of your foolishness of making this foolish vow.

Some implications you can take from this passage.  
What methods do you use to cover your lies?  
Do you justify lying with the excuse I was only joking?

*Proverbs 26:18–19 LSB*  
*Like a madman who shoots Firebrands, arrows, and death,*  
*So is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, “Am I not joking?”*

Do you exaggerate which is a more subtle yet lethal way of lying? You're always late, you're always tired,  
you're never ready, you yell all the time

Do you misrepresent facts about a person or things the person said or did for your own deceitful  
purposes?

Do you complement people, just because you want to manipulate them to do something for  
you?

Do you lie to yourself and others by never seeing the faults and sins of your own heart?

*Proverbs 21:2 LSB*  
*Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But Yahweh weighs the hearts.*

Jesus wants you to pursue the truth.

Jesus keeps it simple.

### **3. . Rather practice integrity vs 37**

*Matthew 5:37 LSB*  
*“But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of the  
evil one.*

In contrast to making oaths for deceptive purposes. Instead of making foolish vows.

The grammar gives a command that should be obeyed as a lifestyle.

Let your statement be...yes or no

If these kinds of oaths mentioned in vs 34-36 are not permitted, how do you support the  
truthfulness of your statement.

If your answer is yes, you support it simply by repeating your initial statement yes.

Nothing needs to be added to the initial assertion.

God's children don't need to utter an oath before they tell a truth.

In your everyday communication, you don't need to use oaths.

*James 5:12 LSB*

*But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your yes be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.*

This does not nullify the serious situations which require an oath like marriage, a court of law or signing legal contracts.

If you're a follower of Jesus, keep it simple.

Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Keep your word.

We call that integrity:

Integrity +time = credibility

Communicate if you're not able to.

Speak the truth yet do so with Love.

*Ephesians 4:15 LSB*

*but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is Christ,*

Repent of any propensity to be deceptive or untruthful.

God sees everything.

God will judge every word that comes from your mouth.

*Matthew 12:36 LSB*

*But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.*

God is the invisible participant to

- every thought
- every word
- every promise
- every commitment
- every vow you make.

If you have sinned in this manner, confess and repent of it.

If your life is characterized by perpetual lies, and constant breaking of your promises and vows, then in fact you may not be a believer.

Repent and turn to Jesus and trust in His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins.

Jesus is the truth. the way and the Life.

If you are a believer immerse yourself in God's word because God's word is absolute truth and you will find your mind occupied more in the truth and less in the lies of the world.

*John 17:17 LSB*  
*"Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth."*

It will impact your conscience, your thinking and thus your decisions, words and actions.

## **Conclusion**

Take vows seriously

Solomon summarized this passage well.

*Ecclesiastes 5:4–6 LSB*  
*When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow!*  
*It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.*  
*Do not allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin, and do not say in the presence of the messenger **of God** that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and wreak destruction on the work of your hands?*