

- **\*Read Matthew 5:33-37\*** As our Lord is laying down the core moral framework of the citizen of His eternal Kingdom, Jesus takes a few moments to focus on an important facet of this life...our word. Here, our Lord seems to be putting a renewed emphasis on the 9th commandment that the people were not to bear false witness.
- As He did with a few different subjects, Jesus begins by mentioning that those listening had heard something said a particular way in time past. They had heard it said by the older generations that they were not to break any oaths that had been made by things that they deemed as being valuable. Some within the Jewish community and gotten into the nasty habit of not taking their word seriously if they had not sworn it upon something that which they deemed to hold great value. Things such as the temple, heaven, or other spiritual subjects were viewed rightly as sacred and therefore the people were to keep their oaths/promises that had been made upon such things. If something was not sworn upon...then that oath or promise wasn't seen as carrying much weight at all. Certainly we see where this completely defeats the purpose of God telling the people to be honest and not bear false witness. Jesus really simplifies these teachings by saying one simple thing. He says that disciples simply need to let their yes be yes and their no be no.
- Why did Jesus feel the need to spend time teaching on this issue? Well, obviously He recognized that sometimes people have trouble being honest. Sadly, we recognize this as being true on almost an daily basis at times. Some people just have a really hard time keeping their word, and I think there might be some reasons for that. You might not think that this teaching of Jesus is really difficult, and in reality it isn't in some respects. Jesus simply says that our yes needs to be yes and our no needs to be no. I want to begin by discussing those things that make this teaching difficult, and then I want to make 4 considerations that will hopefully solidify within our minds the necessity of letting our yes be yes and our no be no.

### **I. DIFFICULTY OF THIS TEACHING: Saying one thing and doing another just isn't that difficult.**

- A. There is this cool show that was on tv a few years ago that is called "Lie To Me." In this show, the main character Cal Lightman is the owner and operator of a firm that focuses on the art of telling whether someone is telling the truth based upon different body language and facial cues. According to the Lightman Group, normal people have a difficult time telling a lie because their sub conscience gives them away though the unintentional cues. This is how normal people operate.
- B. However, this still doesn't stop people from being dishonest. Time and time again, individuals will tell a lie or be untruthful even though they know that they will be found out eventually. Why is this the case? Why are so many people dishonest? It must be because saying one thing and doing another just isn't that difficult, and that sometimes lying is more profitable than telling the truth. If this is true for people who actually have a decent conscience then how easy is it for those whose consciences have been seared and hardened through years of falsehoods?
- C. For some people, being untruthful is just second nature to them. Telling a lie is just as easy as telling the truth, and sadly sometimes it is even easier. Especially when the truth can lead to consequences suffered on our behalf. **(Gal. 4:16)** Not keeping our word and being untruthful becomes especially easy when we benefit from doing so.

### **II. Our "word" is one of our most valuable possessions.**

- A. There are a few key things that define our character and who we are as individuals...our word is one of those things which is why I believe that Jesus takes the time to give great attention to the importance of being truthful and honest when we deal with others.
- B. How people view us as individuals will be determined by whether they can put any stock into what we say to them. Paul says that we are to speak the truth in love, and he adds that in doing so we will be able to grow up into all ways of Christ. **(Eph. 4:15)**
- C. Christ was true to His word in everything that He said to others. "No deceit was found within His mouth" **(I Peter 2:22)** He recognized that value of being a man of His word, and He expects for us to recognize the same thing. To grow into all things of Christ means that we will value truth as He did.

- D. Honesty and truthfulness are also defining characteristics of our Heavenly Father. He is not slow concerning His promise (**II Peter 3:9**) meaning that if God promises something then you can take it to the back knowing that it will be done. Abraham was confident in God's ability to keep His promises and the Hebrew writer confirms that God will keep His promises because He cannot lie. (**Heb. 6:18**)
- E. If truthfulness and honesty are such a defining characteristic of God's character then we ought to fully recognize and understand just how valuable it is for us to be a people who are truthful in our dealings with others. It is a defining characteristics of the righteous.

### **III. We should be a people whose "word" means something.**

- A. So how can we be a people whose word holds great value? It begins by us developing a word that people can depend on. It begins by becoming individuals who other people recognize they can depend on because their word means something. It begins by putting away falsehoods. (**Eph. 4:25**)
- B. When someone asks us something, they can be confident that what we are telling them is true. When we tell someone that we will do something for them, then we actually do that something for them. When we tell someone yes, then they can trust it as being yes. When we tell someone no, then they can trust that to truly mean no. In short, our word is our bond. We feel compelled to keep our word.
- C. Being consistent in doing this will quickly build value in the minds of others concerning our word and our ability to tell the truth. (**Prov. 12:19**) Not only will others see our word as being valuable and meaning something, but God is also pleased with the person who is honest. (**Prov. 12:22**)
- D. However, the opposite is also true. If we are constantly telling others things that are not true or saying one thing and not holding to it then we cannot say that our word is worth anything because it cannot be counted on. No one will ever take us seriously when we say that something will happen or be done. We will become unreliable. Even worse...God is displeased with us and we cannot claim to be one of His faithful.

### **IV. Falsehoods belong to the father of lies, Satan.**

- A. Just as much as truth and honesty are a part of God's character, dishonesty and falsehoods belong to the character of Satan.
- B. In **John 8:44**, Jesus rebukes the Jews who are present because they were not willing to accept the truth that Jesus was setting forth. They claimed to have Abraham as a father, but Jesus instead labels them as being children of Satan because they do not walk in the truth.
- C. Satan certainly is the father of all lies and this was true from the very beginning back in the garden with Adam and Eve. Satan did not lead them to temptation and fall because he spoke truth to them. No, instead he lied to them. He told them that what God had said was not true and that they surely would not die. (**Genesis 3:4**) Adam and Eve quickly found out that they had been lied to as they suffered the consequences for their sins.
- D. Satan continues to use lies to entice the people of this life to forsake what is truly good and to instead go after the facade of what he says is good. He lies by telling people that they must live it up in this world. If they fail to get out everything of this world that they can then they will regret it when this life is over. He lies when he tells us that one moment of weakness won't have serious consequences, but we quickly again find that to be false. Satan fuels the fire for false teachings, and why? Because these false teachings seem good and right, but in the end the false teachings lead souls farther and farther away from the truth. These and many more lies are told by Satan on a daily basis. He promises freedom and joy, but we only ever reap pain and misery when we rely on the world for such things. Those who spread falsehoods are of the same kind and are despised in the eyes of God.

### **V. Failing to keep our word shows a lack of love and respect for those we give our word to.**

- A. So where does the rubber meet the road? Why is it that Jesus stresses that we ought to simply be people who keep our word? I believe Jesus demands such because, again, our word defines the type of people we are and we ought to be a people who love and respect our neighbor. (**Matt. 22:39**) Can we say that we love and respect our neighbor when we constantly fail to keep our word?
- B. Now, let me clarify by stating that there are times when we give our word and things outside of our control cause our word to be broken. That happens from time to time and there is nothing that we can do about that. A simple apology or explanation should suffice in such situations. What I am referring to is when we make a habit of letting our word be broken because we are not putting forth the effort to make sure that our word is kept and our pledge is fulfilled.

- C. We discussed earlier about our word and how it is valuable and how we ought to be a people who are known for having a word that means something. However, how can we expect for there to be any value in our word or pledge when we never put into effort into making it mean something? If I tell someone that I am going to do something, yet I don't put in the effort to make sure it gets done because I just don't care enough, then how can I say that I value my own word?
- D. Again, things outside of our control happen from time to time, but we must give every effort to keep our word when it is given. This means that our **1 BIG THING for this evening is that we need to really think about our promises before we make them.** "Am I really going to give 100% to get this done?" If I can't answer that with a confident "yes" then I don't need to lie to my neighbor and tell them that I will. I need to give every effort to keep my word, even if that means that I will have to suffer for it. **(Psalm 15)** Especially when my neighbor is relying on me to be truthful.
- E. My word is my bond and if I truly love my neighbor then when I give them a yes, then my yes better be truthful. When I give them a no, then my no better be truthful. Anything beyond a simply yes and no doesn't belong to God, but it belongs to Satan. **(Matt. 5:37)**

The temptation to be untruthful is very real to all of us, and I don't think that escapes us because we strive to teach our children even at very young ages the value of being honest. This world would strive to teach and influence them to think that telling the truth is fine and good up to the point where it costs us something and at that point we are free to break promises and lie and it is all good. This is not true for the disciple of Jesus. He demands that we keep it simple and let our yes be yes and our no be no. May God help us to remember the importance of our word and that we will be defined and judged based upon how we use it. May we imitate the example of Jesus and only strive to speak those things that are true and honest. May we serve our Father well with our word and be pleasing to Him in all respects so that we might get to enjoy the fulfillment of His wonderful promises of eternity with Him in the next life.