

**Refuge City Church — April 21, 2024**  
**Gospel of Matthew: “Issues of Life: Integrity” (Matthew 5:33-37)**

***Introduction***

- Six sections dealing with *issues of life* that everyone is tempted by or struggles through... each pertaining to *relationship*.
- **REMEMBER:** In all these issues, Jesus points us back to the source for our consideration...where does our heart trend when these issues arise?

**Matthew 5:33**, “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.’”

- The law
  - **Leviticus 19:12**, “You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.”
  - **Numbers 30:2**, “If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”
  - **Deuteronomy 23:21-23**, “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. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. 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.”
- What are we talking about... Integrity [*honesty; having moral principles and unashamedly abiding by them*]
  - Being undivided and unwavering in your heart and mind that you fulfill all that you commit to and/or promise.
- There are a lot of people that don’t believe words matter.
  - The things that come out of your mouth will very much determine the type of individual you are in the eyes of other people. [*Dad’s advice: “Think before you speak!”*]
  - Our words will dictate our character, and the integrity of our character is a visual display of who we are and what we believe.
  - Can you be trusted? Can others put their confidence in you because of who you are?
- How we speak to one another is one thing...
  - **James 3:2**, “And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.”
  - What we say can build someone up, or tear them down and cut straight to their heart.
- So what Jesus is about to clarify has to do with a particular type of speech... making oaths, vows, commitments, promises.
- But let’s first look at how God uses vows with His people.
  - [*after Abraham obediently places Isaac on the altar for sacrifice*] **Genesis 22:16-17**, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you...”

- **Psalm 89:3-4**, “*I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’*”
- **Psalm 110:4**, “*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind...*”
- **Jeremiah 11:4-5**, “*...Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day.*”
- When God makes a promise, He fulfills it. When He makes an oath or a vow, He follows through.
  - Not that He needs to confirm His words with an oath or vow.
  - **Hebrews 6:13, 17**, “*For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself... So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.*”
- And He expects that His people who vow in His name, do the same.
  - [the story of David and Jonathan] **1 Samuel 20:12, 16-17**, “*And Jonathan said to David, ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father, about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you?... And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, ‘May the Lord take vengeance on David’s enemies.’ And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.*”
  - **Ruth 1:16-17**, “*But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.’*”
  - [King Asa of Judah; after gaining victory over an Ethiopian army 1 million+] **2 Chronicles 15:14-15**, “*They swore an oath to the Lord with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns. And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around.*”
    - Yet later in his life, he began to depend upon his own wisdom, other’s strength, and did not ultimately fulfill the oath to the very end.
    - This gets to the heart of the matter in why Jesus clarifies the sanctity of the words we use and the promises we make.
- We need to understand that making promises is not wrong. Making them in the name of the Lord is not wrong.
  - It’s our follow-through. Being men and women of our word is what ultimately determines our integrity
  - Not to mention... using the Lord’s name as certainty to what we will do is something we need to take very seriously!

**Matthew 5:34-36**, “*But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.*”

- Jesus is not changing the law. He is clarifying that the tradition of a God-honoring vow had been watered down to adjust to people’s sinful nature of lying and deceit.

- Swearing by things other than God [heaven, earth, or Jerusalem] were being used to give themselves an 'out' for whatever reason for not fulfilling their promises.
  - Or, they were flat out lying and deceiving people and covering it up with spiritual-sounding oath or vow language.
- What Jesus makes clear is that no matter what you vow, you are to fulfill, because God above is the owner of all things.
  - He is everywhere and therefore you have no 'out', and by breaking your promises/ your word, you sin against the Lord.
- The Pharisees and other religious leaders of the day were teaching 'loopholes' to God's discipline, and ways they could manipulate the system to avoid accountability.
- **Hebrews 6:16**, "For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation."
  - To give greater credibility to your word by invoking the name of the Lord, again, is a serious issue!
  - By doing so, you are inviting the Lord God to be a witness to the vow you are making to another; whether it be in marriage, the workplace, or otherwise.
- In God's eyes, the oath, vow, or promise you make is considered to be *absolute truth*.
  - This is why we bring God into our marriage vows.
  - This is why we "swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth" if we find ourselves in court.
  - Otherwise we commit perjury [v. 33]; we swear falsely, and that is sin in the eyes of the Lord.
- Every time we have to justify our word with phrases like "I swear to God!", or "I swear on my mother's grave!", and then don't come through, we slowly chip away at our character and integrity.
  - Jesus called out the Pharisees for behaving in such a way.
  - **Matthew 23:16-22**, "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.' You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? 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.' You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it."
  - **QUOTE:** "Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which he is not involved; there cannot be one kind of language in the Church and another kind of language in the shipyard or the factory or the office...the fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life, and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and in every activity of life...we will regard all promises as sacred if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God." [William Barclay]

## **Conclusion**

**Matthew 5:37**, "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil."

- The Lord hates a "lying tongue" and "a false witness who breathes out lies". [Proverbs 6]
  - **Proverbs 12:22**, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord..."
  - Liars are listed among those whose end result is the lake of fire. [Revelation 21:8]
- We have been created and redeemed by God, who is Truth. He therefore calls on us to be people who live out who we've been created to be: people of truth.
  - **Psalm 51:6**, "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart."
  - **James 5:12**, "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."
- Let's be men and women who speak truth, live in truth, and abide by the truth of God's Word.
  - So be careful about the situations and conversations you put yourself in where lying has to be your way out.
- Let your integrity shine so that it gives evidence to the faithfulness and truthfulness of who God is!