



# MATTHEW



# Traditional Righteousness: Keeping Oaths

Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name...Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.

Exodus 20:7, 16

If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to keep it, because he will require it of you, and it will be counted against you as sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, it will not be counted against you as sin. Be careful to do whatever comes from your lips, because you have freely vowed what you promised to the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23

Do not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God; I  
am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:12

Offer a thanksgiving sacrifice to God, and pay your vows to the Most High.

Psalm 50:14

When you make a vow to God, don't delay fulfilling it, because he does not delight in fools. Fulfill what you vow. Better that you do not vow than that you vow and not fulfill it.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5

The only way to overcome the unpredictability of your future is the power of promising. If forgiving is the only remedy for your painful past, promising is the only remedy for your uncertain future....All human community, from the ghetto to the global village, depends on the power of promising. Where people no longer have the inner daring to make serious promises or the grit to keep them, human community becomes a combat zone of competing self-maximizers. We are at sea; life is all open-ended, loose-jointed, tossed around in the backwash of unpredictability. Where others cannot assume that I will be there with them as promised, I have helped abolish community.

Lewis Smedes



# Vicious Cycle: Deceptive & Manipulative Words

Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever takes an oath by the temple, it means nothing. But whoever takes an oath by the gold of the temple is bound by his oath.' Blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? Also, 'Whoever takes an oath by the altar, it means nothing; but whoever takes an oath by the gift that is on it is bound by his oath.' Blind people! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore, the one who takes an oath by the altar takes an oath by it and by everything on it. The one who takes an oath by the temple takes an oath by it and by him who dwells in it. And the one who takes an oath by heaven takes an oath by God's throne and by him who sits on it.

Matthew 23:16-22

But Jesus goes right to the heart of why people swear oaths. He knew that they do it to impress others with their sincerity and reliability and thus gain acceptance of what they are saying and what they want. It is a method for getting their way. They are declaring some promise of purpose or some point of information or knowledge dear to them. They want their hearers to accept what they say and do what they want...It is simply a device of manipulation, designed to override the judgement and will of the ones they are focusing upon, to push them aside, rather than respecting them and leaving their decision and action strictly up to them.

Dallas Willard

# The System of Oaths

- The world and our lives can be compartmentalized into what's sacred and what's secular
- Lying is just a part of life in the real world and speech ethics are guided by social norms that exist to advance self-interest

**Transforming Initiative:  
Truthful, Simple Words**

The positive focus of Jesus' command of truth, in summary, is this: the whole of Christian speech is to be invisibly oath-laden, transparently honest. When a Christian says, "I will be there," the Christian will be there. When a Christian says no, the Christian means no. When a Christian joins a group or enrolls in a course or accepts an invitation, the Christian fully means what that act entails and is faithfully there. Yes means yes. By obeying this little command, a Christian's whole life is invested with the seriousness of an oath.

Dale Bruner

# Fewness of Words

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests had a meeting with the elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin. After tying Jesus up, they led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate. So Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You have said it.”

And the chief priests began to accuse Him of many things. Then Pilate questioned Him again, “Are You not answering anything? Look how many things they are accusing You of!” But Jesus still did not answer anything, so Pilate was amazed.

Mark 15:1-5



# Fullness of Words

They were all speaking well of him and were amazed by the gracious words that came from his mouth.

Luke 4:22

Simplicity of speech flows from a heart that has bonded with the heart of Jesus: compassionate and truthful, loving and good.

Jan Johnson

A good man produces good out of the good storeroom of his heart.  
An evil man produces evil out of the evil storeroom, for his mouth  
speaks from the overflow of the heart.

Luke 6:45

# An Invitation to Speech Therapy

**Speak Less**

# Experiments in Speaking Less

- Try not to speak at all for a certain period of time
- Try abstaining from speech practices like interrupting, cursing, getting the last word, giving your opinion when asked

# Experiments in Speaking Less

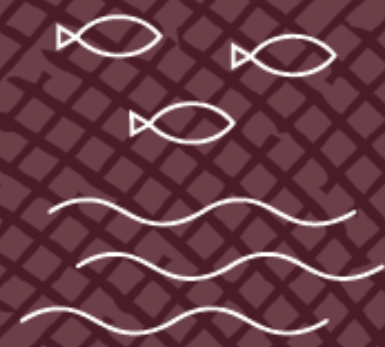
- What did I learn in my own family of origin about speaking?
- If you took inventory of your words, what would they say is most important in your life?
- What feelings, people, or situations trigger overtalking, unhelpful, or hurtful talking
- What do you need to know from God in those moments that can become an invitation to prayer?



**Speak the Truth**

# Experiments in Speaking Less

- Try to answer a question with a simple yes or no
- Speak honestly when you're tempted to withhold or appease others
- Ask God as you begin each day to help you love others through simple, helpful speech. Consider those you're the muted to run over with your words.
- Keep your smallest commitments or say no to a commitment you can't keep



# MATTHEW



Being born again happens in an instant. Learning to live as a child of God takes a lifetime.

Dr. Derwin Gray

