

Apprenticed to Jesus: Radical Truthfulness*Matthew 5:33-37*

Introduction: Making vows and oaths was a big deal in Jesus' day. It was a part of Greek and Roman culture. It was practiced in Jewish culture throughout the Old Testament right up to Jesus' day. But in Jesus' day, the practice of oath-making had become convoluted. Instead of being something that affirmed the truthfulness of one's words it had become a tool of deception. If an oath was crafted just right a loophole could be created to free a person from his or her vow. Jesus confronts such a practice in the passage that we are considering today. His desire is that his apprentices practice radical truthfulness. May we grow in radical truthfulness as we consider this passage.

Opening Discussion: Mark Twain once said, "If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything." What do you think he meant by that?

Read Leviticus 19:12 & Deuteronomy 23:21-23

1. What do these passages say about making vows?

Read Matthew 23:16-22

2. What insight does this passage offer in terms of how oaths were being used in Jesus' day?

Read Matthew 5:33-37

3. How would you summarize what Jesus teaches about making vows?
4. What does Jesus oppose and what does he support in terms of our words?
5. Why does Jesus say it is better to not make oaths?
6. What are some the statements of assurance (oaths) that you hear most often today?

Brian said:

Are you a person who speaks truth? Does your "yes" mean "yes" and does your "no" mean "no"? Do the people that you interact with day-to-day -- your family, your friends, your work associates -- do they know that you are a person of your word? Do you practice radical truthfulness? That is what Jesus says this deeper righteousness looks like. That is what he is calling us to.

7. How would you evaluate yourself? Are you a person who practices radical truthfulness?

8. In what situations do you tend to struggle with truthfulness?

Brian gave 5 comments about radical truthfulness:

1. If you have a truth-telling problem, you have a heart problem - Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 that ". . . *the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.*" The only way you will be a person who lives out radical truthfulness is if you are fundamentally truthful in your character.

2. Radical truthfulness is extra hard if there are things in your life that shouldn't be there - Radical truthfulness is hard for all of us, but if you are living a life that is not consistent with the life Jesus wants you to live; if you are doing things you shouldn't then it is going to be extra hard to live a truthful life. You are going to want to hide your sin.

3. Radical truthfulness applies to things big and small - Truthfulness matters in all things . . . taxes . . . business dealing . . . general conversation . . . when you write that paper and need to give credit to someone else's idea . . . when you get stopped by the police for speeding . . . when you say, "I'll pray for you," but never do.

4. Radical truthfulness does not mean meanness - We are told in Ephesians 4:15 "*to speak the truth in love*" What you say and how you say it, must be informed by the command to *speak the truth in love*.

5. Radical truthfulness is a better way to live - Radical truthfulness is a way to feel good. It is a way to live guilt free. It is a way to walk in integrity. It is a way to keep relationships strong. Because any kind of deception or lying damages relationships whether it is a human relationship or your relationship with God. Lying and deception leads to guilt and broken trust and separation in relationships. Radical truthfulness is simply a better way to live.

9. Which of these comments impacted you the most?

10. Are there any areas of life in which it is hard for you to believe that radical truthfulness is a better way to live?

11. How do you sense God is leading you to respond to what you have learned?