

Real Christianity: The Sermon on the Mount

#15: Making & Keeping Promises

Matthew 5:33-37

All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. (Matthew 5:37 NIV)

Be careful of the promises you make, because God expects you to keep your promises.

A) Take responsibility for your promises

A promise is something like, "I promise to pay your money back." An oath is adding to the promise like this: "I swear on my mother's grave to pay your money back." Making an oath with your promise, or attempting to increase the integrity of your word by associating it with something or someone grand, that kind of swearing, so to speak, is what Jesus is denouncing. Therefore, one simple thing He is saying in this passage is that we need to take full responsibility for fulfilling our promises.

Jesus was not opposed to making promises. But He wanted the promises we make to simply be backed by our own personal integrity.

Jesus tells us that in response to a request, simply and honestly say Yes or No.

B) Be careful about making promises

Did you notice that Jesus said you can say no.

"It is a trap to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider one's vows" (Prov 20:25 NIV).

Sometimes we make promises out of pride. We want this person to think highly of us so we make a promise we will regret.

It is even more prideful to make unconditional promises. God is the only one who can make unconditional promises. I'm not sure there are any unconditional promises we can make.

Some commentary on the pride of making unconditional promises in things we are not in control of.

(James 4:13-16 NLT) **Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit."**
¹⁴ **How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone.** ¹⁵ **What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that."** ¹⁶ **Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil.**

There is a lot of wisdom in replying to a request, "I would like to do that and so I will try to do that."

C) Be careful about making people make promises

D) Keep your promises

When you make a vow to the LORD your God, be prompt in fulfilling whatever you promised him. For the LORD your God demands that you promptly fulfill all your

vows, or you will be guilty of sin. However, it is not a sin to refrain from making a vow. But once you have voluntarily made a vow, be careful to fulfill your promise to the LORD your God. (Deut 23:21-23)

One of the measures of maturity is the number of commitments and responsibilities you have.

The most loving people are the most committed people- they have made commitments to love people.

Making and keeping promises is godly because this is a foundational characteristic of God.

God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through? (Num 23:19 NLT).

God's promises are remarkable because some of them have cost Him dearly. **"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."** (Matt 1:21 NIV).

(Matt 26:38-39).

Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? ² Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. ³ Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends. ⁴ Those who despise flagrant sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the LORD, and keep their promises even when it hurts. (Psalms 15:1-4 NLT)

Discussion ?'s

- 1) Why is it easy to make promises that you will regret? Do you have an example?
- 2) What are things that build our reputation as being trustworthy? What are things that damage this reputation?
- 3) What are reasons we should be careful to make promises?
- 4) Why should we be careful of trying to make others make promises to us?
- 5) Do you have an example of a promise you kept, "even when it hurt"?
- 6) What was most meaningful to you about the Sunday message? Why?