

Kingdom Living

Studies From The Sermon On The Mount

Oaths, Integrity, and Truthfulness: Radical Honesty

Matthew 5:27-32

The central theme of the Sermon on the Mount is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Key Idea: Kingdom Righteousness is Radical Righteousness.

- **Radical Righteousness demands and produces Radical Honesty.**

Matthew 5:33-37 (NIV)

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’

But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Main Point: Kingdom People live with such integrity that their words need no external guarantees.

1. The Crisis of Truth

- Our world has a truth problem.
- Jesus calls His people to radical honesty, focusing on the heart, not just speech.

2. The Context of Jesus’ Teaching

Matthew 5:33 (NIV)

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’”

A. The Old Testament Background

- **Leviticus 19:12** – “You shall not swear by My name falsely.”
- **Numbers 30:2** – “If a man vows a vow to the LORD, he shall not break his word.”
- **Deuteronomy 23:21-23** – “When you make a vow, you shall not delay to fulfill it.”

B. The Rabbinic Distortion

- Swear “by heaven” or “by the earth” – not binding.
 - Swear “by Jerusalem” – less binding.
 - Swear “by the Temple” or “by the gold of the Temple” – maybe binding.
- Instead of cultivating honesty, people learned how to lie cleverly – with religious loopholes.

Isaiah 29:13

The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.”

C. The Kingdom Principle

- Jesus’ point: **Our life should be marked by truthfulness, not technicality.**
 - Don’t invoke anything at all; just tell the truth.

3. The Corruption of Oaths

Matthew 5:35-36 (NIV)

But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

- All of life is lived before God. There’s no such thing as a “neutral” or “less sacred” promise.

4. The Call to Simple Truth

Matthew 5:37 (NIV)

All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

- The goal is consistency between inner conviction and outward expression.

John 8:44 (NIV)

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

5. Practical Implications for Kingdom People

Kingdom People practice:

- A. Honesty in Personal Relationships
- B. Honesty in the Workplace
- C. Honesty in Church Life
- D. Honesty on Social Media
 - Honesty online is just as vital as honesty offline.
- E. Honesty in Promise-Making
 - Integrity isn't built in big moments; it's shaped by the small ones: keeping your word, showing up, speaking truth without spin.

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

6. Key Takeaways

1. Kingdom honesty begins in the heart.
 - When our hearts are true, our words will be too.
2. Every word is spoken in the presence of God.
3. Simplicity glorifies God.
4. Honesty bears witness to the world.
5. Honesty costs but offers eternal rewards.
6. Christ empowers our honesty.
7. In the Kingdom of God, honesty is our identity.