

WEEK 5 (September 13-19) Sermon on the Mount— “Say Yes or No”
(Matthew 5:33-37)

Starting the Conversation (Read James 4:13-16)

Trust is lacking in our world. We live in a time and place where skepticism, doubt, suspicion, and protective measures are the standard, and with good reason. Commitments are easily made and easily broken. So, we live by contracts and overly exaggerated promises to ensure follow-through and ease suspicions. The first century version of this practice, during the time of Jesus, was the practice of making vows. People would vow by God, the heavens, the temple, or other powerful and magnificent elements of spiritual life. Jesus speaks against this practice, not only because it should be unnecessary for people who are committed to truth and honesty, but more because it assumes knowledge and sovereignty that humans do not possess. We know nothing of the future and what it brings. We can only make predictions and assumptions. This is not primarily an issue of our relationship with others but our relationship with God. We should not speak to future events and what we will do at that time. We should simply live with the commitment and trust that we will live faithfully and obedient to God whatever may come, trusting that God is the ultimate provider, rescuer, and judge in all times and all places. We cannot hold God or ourselves to a commitment made without ultimate knowledge or understanding but, rather, live with an openness to and dependence on God for tomorrow, knowing that He has all wisdom for all things.

Let’s Read Matthew 5:33-37

Leader: Jesus tells us that we are not to make any kind of vows. They are not necessary and they assume that we can control the future in ways that we are not able to do. He tells us to keep responses to a simple “YES” or “NO.”

- People do not typically make “vows” by heaven or earth today. What do vows and oaths look like in our current culture?
- Why do we feel compelled to make these kinds of vows or oaths?
- What is the danger in making these kinds of statements?

Let’s Read Ephesians 4:14-25

Leader: It is important for people, especially followers of Jesus, to build trust with one another. We need to commit to others to only speak truth, and we need to have confidence that those in the church will only speak truth to us. With this commitment, vows and oaths become unnecessary.

- Is it EVER ok to not speak truth?
- What happens if we do NOT make the commitment to ONLY speak truth?
- What temptations do we face that pull us away from our commitment to believing and speaking truth?
- What things MOST destroy trust?
- Why is it so important to have trust within the church and the body of Christ?
- How can we rebuild trust when it has been broken?

Closing—

- What can you do this week to make an increased commitment to truth and building trust?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for reaching out to us through Your prophets, Your scriptures, and Your Holy Spirit. Thank you for equipping us with truth. Thank you for giving us a conscience that troubles us when we are accepting or sharing lies. Please continue to give us a discontent and troubled conscience with lies, gossip, and anything else that destroys trust and/or leads us away from your truth. Forgive us for every way that we hurt You, ourselves, and others with lies. Grow in us a strong commitment to truth. Help us to increasingly trust You with the future, and enable us to be faithful with what we face today. In Jesus’ name. Amen.