

# Housegroup Study Notes – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017

## Matthew 5:33-37

### Leaders Notes

## Day 5

*For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you." Isaiah 41:13*

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The Langham Partnership - enabling church leaders to receive training

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The Parochial Church Council (PCC)

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The Annexe Housegroup, Eileen Edmunds & Mike Stevenson

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Jumpers, 4-5 years

### Programme of Studies

Jan 4	Matthew 2:1-12	The visit of the Magi
Jan 18	Matthew 2:13-23	Escape to Egypt; Return to Nazareth
Feb 1	Matthew 3:1-17	John the Baptist prepares the way; The Baptism of Jesus
Feb 15	Matthew 4:1-25	Jesus is tested in the wilderness; Jesus begins to preach
Mar 1	Matthew 5:1-16	The Sermon on the Mount: Beatitudes; Salt and light
Mar 15	Matthew 5: 17-26	The fulfilment of the law; Murder
Mar 29	Matthew 5:27-32, 19:3-11	Adultery; Divorce
<b>Apr 5</b>	<b>Matthew 5:33-37</b>	<b>Oaths</b>

## Passage: Matthew 5, 33-37

### Section A



#### What stood out for me from the passage:

Let your yes be yes and your no be no.



#### Questions I have about the passage:

What is meant by an oath?

What is the significance of a reference to swearing by ..?

What is meant by “anything beyond this comes from the evil one”?

Does this mean we should never sign an agreement?



#### How I would summarise the main point/s of the passage:

Integrity is a major characteristic of a Christian.

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### Section B



#### What I will take away from the passage (encouragement, lesson or similar):



#### Someone I know who could benefit from hearing about the passage:

# Study Notes

## Who do you trust?

Do you trust

- Politicians?
- The media?
- Doctors?
- Salesmen?

Are there people you do trust and rely on?

Are there people you do not trust and rely on?

## Why do people lie?

- To protect themselves
- To grow their reputations
- To manipulate others

## Why do people fail to do what they have promised to do?

- Because they never intended to do
- They make rash promises
- They overcommit
- The situation changes

## What is the purpose of an oath?

To verify the truth.

Because in the absence of an oath people do not believe us.

## What does the Old Testament say about oaths? What are the key messages from each of the following passages?

Numbers 30: 1-2

1. Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands:
2. When a man makes a vow to the Lord or **takes an oath** to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

Oaths are to be taken seriously. When you take an oath you must intend and expect to fulfil it.

Leviticus 19: 12

12. "Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord."

Breaking an oath profanes the name of God.

## Genesis 24: 1-9

1. Abraham was now very old, and the Lord had blessed him in every way.
2. He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh.
3. I want you to **swear by the Lord**, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living,
4. but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.”
5. The servant asked him, “What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?”
6. “Make sure that you do not take my son back there,” Abraham said.
7. “The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father’s household and my native land and who spoke to me and **promised me on oath**, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’—he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there.
8. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there.”
9. So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and **swore an oath** to him concerning this matter.

Oaths were an expected way of life and taken very seriously.

## Nehemiah 5: 11-13

11. Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.”
12. “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials **take an oath** to do what they had promised.
13. I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!” At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. And the people did as **they had promised**.

People did what they had promised under oath.

**If the words of the law were so clear, why was it necessary for Jesus to issue a clarification?**

## Matthew 23: 16-22

16. “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’
17. You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?
18. You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’
19. You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?
20. Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it.
21. And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it.
22. And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

As in many other cases, the priests had weakened the law for their own convenience.

(No adultery, so they allowed divorce on demand and remarriage.)

## What is Jesus' response? What is he actually saying?

Matthew 5: 34-37

34. But I tell you, **do not swear an oath** at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne;
35. or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.
36. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.
37. **All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'**; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

All things in creation come from God. Breaking any oath is an affront to God.

The safest approach is never to swear an oath.

Any deception comes from the devil. As Christians, we are called to reflect God's holiness and God cannot lie.

## Is it right to take an oath or sign a contract?

The Quakers believe that it is not right and refuse.

However, there are many places in the bible where God makes covenants, but he does so as a sign to others, not because that is the only way he will keep his word.

There is no problem in our taking an oath or signing an agreement, but we should not need to.

## Has anyone been in a situation where they needed to take an oath (being a witness in court for example?) If so, how did it affect your behaviour?

It shouldn't do, but in my personal experience it does focus the mind.

## Are there situations where lying is justified?

This is a very tough question. There is no easy answer.

Exodus 1: 15-19

15. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah,
16. "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live."
17. The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.
18. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?"
19. The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

Joshua 2: 2-6

2. The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land."
3. So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."

4. But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from.
5. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don’t know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.”
6. (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.)

### **What about “little white lies”**

- Does my bum look big in this?
- How do I look?

We should always seek to tell the truth, in the nicest way possible/

Consider silence!

### **Why is being true to our word such a big deal?**

“The power of promise makes human community possible.”

Integrity enables members of a community to work together.

It is the basis of all healthy relationships.

Think back to the start of the study.

- Do people trust you?
- Do people accept your work and expect you to keep it?
- How do you want other people to see you?
- How do you want non-Christians to think about you?

When you have time read the essay “Controlling the Unpredictable – The Power of Promising”

### Matthew 5:33-37

	NIV	ESV	Amplified Bible	New Living Translation	The Message
	Oaths	Lust		Teaching about Vows	Empty Promises
33	'Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but fulfil to the Lord the oaths you have made."	"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.'	"Again, you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not make false vows, but you shall fulfill your vows to the Lord [as a religious duty].'	"You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the lord.' <b>Num 30:2.</b>	"And don't say anything you don't mean. This counsel is embedded deep in our traditions. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk, saying, 'I'll pray for you,' and never doing it, or saying, 'God be with you,' and not meaning it. You don't make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. In making your speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say 'yes' and 'no.' When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong.
34	But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne;	But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,	But I say to you, do not make an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God;	But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne.	<a href="#">Mike's observation:</a>
35	or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.	or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.	or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.	And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King.	<a href="#">IMHO this does not convey the sense of the other translations.</a>
36	And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.	And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.	Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you are not able to make a single hair white or black.	Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black.	
37	All you need to say is simply "Yes," or "No"; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.	Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.	But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no' [a firm yes or no]; anything more than that comes from the evil one.	Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.	