

Let Your Yes be Yes

But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.' Anything beyond that comes from the evil one.

MATTHEW 5:37

Written by Bill Perkins

When placed under oath,
a witness swears to,
“Tell the truth,
the whole truth,
and nothing but the truth.”
But “the whole truth”
is often where deception hides.

We tell the part
we want others to know,
and leave out the part
that would expose us.

That isn't truth.
It's a cover-up
dressed as honesty.

Jesus addresses this
in the final antithesis:
“You have heard that it was said,
'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...”
(Matthew 5:33–34)

His generation had developed
a system that made vows
sound binding
while leaving room
to escape them.
They adjusted the force

of an oath
by choosing what
they swore by.

They said an oath
by the temple meant nothing,
but an oath
by the temple's gold
was binding.
An oath by the altar
meant nothing,
but an oath
by the gift on the altar
counted.

Jesus asks,
“Which is greater:
the gift,
or the altar
that makes the gift sacred?”

The altar belonged to God.
So did the temple,
its gold,
heaven,
earth,
Jerusalem,
and even their own heads.

They were using
what belonged to God
to make promises
they could later avoid.
This wasn't a problem
with the objects.
It was a problem
with the heart.
They used holy things
to sound honest
without being honest.

We do the same
when we tell only
the portion of the truth

that protects us.
We may not swear
by an altar,
but we can use
religious language,
strong promises,
or carefully chosen words
to hide what
we don't want others to know.

An oath can make
a partial truth sound complete.
It can make a promise sound sacred
while protecting the speaker
from the cost of keeping it.
Jesus does not merely ask
for better vows.
He calls for words
that come from an undivided heart—
words needing no oath,
qualification,
or escape route.
The whole truth
leaves nowhere to hide.

Jesus isn't giving us
a better formula
for making our words believable.

He is removing
the loophole.
A truthful person
doesn't need an oath
to make words reliable.
“Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’
and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’
Anything beyond this
comes from the evil one.”
(Matthew 5:37)