



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

[CALL TO HEAR]

Matthew 5:33-37 ESV

Oaths

³³ "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.'³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,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 take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

**Pastor – "People of God, this is the Word of God."
People – "Thanks be to God."**

Pray

Introduction

At a very young age children learn the value and power of telling lies, why you ask, because the younger you are the more gullible are those around you. That just works for kids because children are all about self-preservation in the social arena. They want friends, they want social standing, they want to be liked, therefore there is an attraction to telling tall tales.

Research tells us that by four years of age, 90% of kids will understand the meaning of lying and that by the time of 18 about 60% are incapable of having a conversation without lying once every ten minutes.¹

You see here is what we are learning on the playgrounds of our youth, if you are caught lying more than others or if your lying has gotten the group in trouble somehow, you are no longer allowed near sensitive information or into the inner circle. If you were the one that boasted about having the new

¹ <https://www.crossrivertherapy.com/research/lying-statistics>



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

Atari/Nintendo/PlayStation when you really didn't, that was held against you. When you went home and told your mom that Jimmy blew up the neighbor's mailbox with a Cherry bomb and when your mom told Jimmy's parents, you lied about telling her and trust in the group began to wane. Perhaps you lied to get out of a situation when your friends wanted to try something new or dangerous like jumping in one of the local canals that had warning signs about alligators, and you were like *I can't I have an ear infection*. Whatever that was if you were not careful that led to you becoming a **social outcast**. And you could be branded with this taunt, "*Liar, liar, pants on fire, hang them on a telephone wire!*"

I don't know about you but when I was a kid, I always found myself in a **moral dilemma**, I either hid the truth from my parents what my friends were doing or I lied to my friends about not saying anything. Both options though puts one in hot water with someone and **both options are sin**. So as a kid, instead of taking option 3 which was leave the group before something happens, you embrace your natural inclination to stretch the truth and ignored the fact that you were indeed a liar. Research also shows the appeal to that decision for about 50% of the lies you tell are strictly for personal gain. ²

Now, if you tell me, you don't have a problem with lying, well, let's just let God's Word do the talking.

Psalm 116:11 ESV

I said in my alarm, "All mankind are liars."

And here in then lies the problem for all of us.

Revelation 21:8 ESV

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and **all liars**, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

² <https://www.uwlax.edu/currents/how-often-do-people-lie/>



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

An unrepentant and nonconfessional liar, someone that would rather use falsehoods than truth to direct an outcome, someone that believes they don't have this problem, someone that consistently uses lying for their own gain, and makes it a part of their daily practice, is not in the Kingdom of God.

Now most people who feel guilty about lying will try to figure out a way to deal with it on their own. As a kid, perhaps you learned this technique, it's called **finger crossing**. Some sources claim that this came from paganism whereby people would cross their fingers for good luck, and as a sign would not uncross their fingers until what was asked for was accomplished.³ While there's another story that it came from the Catholic Church whereby representing the sign of the cross, and when giving a promise the sign of the cross would negate the promise to the individual in God's name.⁴ The other way we would try to increase our street cred was to make an oath ourselves, "*Cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye.*"

Both represent man's way of his inability to keep truth, both represent the false belief that swearing oaths make us more believable and trustworthy, and both uses for the Christian puts us in the ground of blasphemy.

In Jesus' day the story was no different. People were still trying to figure out a way to be trusted while not always keeping their word. As a matter of fact, they had their own traditions, which involved God's name in swearing oaths⁵, as Jesus will point out to us today the work in trying not to sin was defaming God's name, **the reality was they were looking for ways to be dishonest without sinning**. Jesus instead will be explaining today that the Word of the Christian is not built in trickery, beguile, or what Oath you can give but rather the Word of a Christian is compelling for we are speaking for Christ.

MP:

**The power of a Christian's Word is
Based in the Power of Christ.**

³ <https://www.whatsupyukon.com/arts-entertainment/yukon-words/crossing-your-fingers>

⁴ <https://www.whatsupyukon.com/arts-entertainment/yukon-words/crossing-your-fingers>

⁵ ὀμνῶ **omnyō**, om-noo'-o; a prolonged form of a primary, but obsolete ὄμω ὄμō, for which another prolonged form ὀμῶ omōō om-o'-o is used in certain tenses; to swear, i.e. take (or declare on) oath:—swear.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

Now that is not to say there is never a time not to give an oath, sometimes it is necessary, sometimes it is required from others, it's not about you trying to find an out to a dilemma. In the text today we are going to learn how this all pans out by looking at three things we should never do. 1st **we should never give an oath without the intent of keeping it**, no finger crossing for us! 2nd **we should never give an oath in anyone else' name but God**, if we are required to do so. 3rd, **we should never give an oath when a simple 'yes' or 'no' is sufficient**, because of who we represent.

1. Never give an oath without the intent of keeping it. (33)

³³"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.

Alright so just like last week we need to go do a little investigating and see what these guys were building their oral traditions on. First off, as Jesus starts with, "*Again you have heard it was said*", means that Jesus is confronting this false teaching that the Pharisees have been teaching the populace. Next there's this phrase about *not swearing falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn*, where does that come from? The Pharisees never made up a rule, they just took OT law and then they spun it to work for them in a way that benefitted their sinful desires. It was important for them to look Holy so that their works of righteousness would not be questioned.

Deuteronomy 6:13 ESV

It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.

When living among the pagans, the intent here of Deuteronomy, when an oath is required only your God's name shall come out of your mouth. You do not swear by any false gods or the gods of other nations or by any standards they use.

Numbers 30:2 ESV



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or **swears an oath** to bind himself by a pledge, he shall **not break his word**. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

Then whatever you swear by God's name, since you are invoking His name, you shall uphold.

Exodus 20:7 ESV

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in **vain**, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

For if you break the pledge you took under God's name in vain for something not necessary, showing it was unworthy of God's name to be used, then you are now liable to judgment.

Now it was noted in Jesus' time that the scribes that worked with the Pharisees deciphered this to mean that you must be honest and keep what is promised to God, but this same commitment does not necessarily apply to human relations. They had created a loophole, it is better not to sin against God, therefore, **not to keep your word is a good thing if it kept you from not taking God's name in vain**. It's contradictory law, it allows for sin. It's a loophole, it's their version of crossing their fingers when they made a promise. Just in case you are wondering how the OT prophets interpreted that law.

Zechariah 8:16-17 ESV

¹⁶These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for **peace**; **(Advent)** ¹⁷do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and **love no false oath**, for all these things I hate, declares the Lord."

So obviously the intent of the law applies to all you deal with, for **all are made aware of God through your dealings!** You see **your Word** in the ancient world acted as your **credit score**, and you needed good witnesses to your behavior if you wanted to do something by way of credit/reputation, that's why you never gave an oath without the intent on keeping it. BUT the Pharisees had



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

created a good old boy system by which they gave each other good credit ratings. I use the term credit rating because we are familiar with that in our time, but their credit rating got them not just preferable monetary treatment it got them the best seats in the house, the positions of honor in the synagogues, wherever they went. But their credit was not based on honest dealings but by how good they followed the tradition of squirming out of oaths. Then on top of that if you were not in the Pharisees and spoke out against their practices you could find yourself just like today, kicked out of the banking system. Placed on the back row and could become an outcast in society.

The **Pharisees** had **forgotten** their very **first oath**, that all Jewish males carried the physical sign of; **Circumcision**. They were marked as the people of God, and therefore according to the prophet Zechariah, should have despised false oaths. The signs of their manipulation for gain had revealed their sign of capitulation to their true Father, Satan.

John 8:44 ESV

You (**Pharisees**) are of your **father the devil**, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

You know as a Christian you have made an oath as well it is called **Baptism**. You declared in front of the church, in front of the world, and in front of Christ Himself that you belonged to Him, and that you wanted to be associated with Him. We too now have a calling, to keep our Word, and make sure to the best of our ability, by faith and through grace, we uphold the testimony of Christ through our actions, displaying this truth:

**The power of a Christian's Word is
Based in the Power of Christ.**

Let us live our lives with the intent of keeping our oath to live faithfully for Christ understanding that how we treat everyone is a display of God in this world.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

2. Never give an oath in anyone else's name but God. (34-36)

³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 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 take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

Jesus is combatting a cultural and social manipulation of using God's name for the purposes of increasing social status. BUT if you look forward into the NT there are instances where oaths are given, and I will show you shortly Jesus answers an oath very publicly which shows there are times and places by which an oath maybe required. We have already stated that once here today and that was in the public act of Baptism, it is a display of God's oath to us and in return our pledge to live for Him. We also have Christian marriages whereby we invoke the name of God so that our marriages would testify to God's covenantal love to us as we display it to our spouses. We also have court room settings, whereby people make an oath to tell the "truth" so help us God. To answer then, when Jesus is saying *don't take an oath at all* we notice immediately his listing of the different ways in which it was done. He is speaking specifically to the practices that were developed and abused by the religious leaders of the day. Don't be that guy that swears falsely, habitually, and needlessly for personal gain.

As far as our NT examples go:

Paul frequently used an oath formula to testify to himself not lying about his intentions to deliver the Grace of the Gospel (Rom 1:9, 9:1; 2 Cor. 2:23, 11:31; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:5; 1 Tim. 2:7)

Romans 1:9 ESV

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you.

2 Corinthians 2:23 ESV



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth.

Paul invokes God's name so that his listeners would not turn their ears off to his message, the giving of the Gospel.

The author of Hebrews identifies another reason for an oath.

Hebrews 6:13-16 ESV

¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, **since he had no one greater by whom to swear**, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

Making an Oath does not necessarily imply a previous dishonesty - For God cannot lie (Heb 6:18) but is acceptable in cases of extreme importance in confirming God's plans for redemption. For example, every time a covenant is given in the Bible it is a pledge, an oath, initiated with the blood of a sacrifice, that it will be upheld by God. So, oaths are acceptable to give, they should only be utilized in extreme matters of importance, that ascribe to matters of the Gospel for the redemption of His children.

Then Jesus in this text says, don't take an oath at all, *either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,* 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 take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.* Of which Jesus elaborated on in Matthew 23 when he was dealing out His Woe to Yous to the Pharisees.

Matthew 23:16-22 ESV

¹⁶"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' ¹⁷You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.' ¹⁹You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

everything on it.²¹ And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. ²² And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

The point is don't make a game of trying to closely align yourself with the temple to make your boastful swearing seem more important for all of it belongs to God. As a matter of fact, don't swear by anything on the earth not even the hair on your head because that's owned by God too! Stop making oath taking a game for your own personal game, for you are making a mockery of the name of God.

Let me restate point 2 in another way.

NEVER swear in anyone else's name, for no one else's name has the power to save!

- That's why when we are baptized, we call on God's name for He is the one that will persevere in us to the end.
- That's why when we get married, we call on God for he's that one that controls sanctification in our marriages.
- That's why when we join a church as a covenant member, we commit to God's will being done utilizing us for ministry.

All of those are admitting and confirming that only God has the power to save us, preserve us, and sanctify us in this world. Oaths in our name or anyone else's lacks any power to do a salvific work! If you must take an oath, you must put it in God's name but only for important Gospel matters and only for matters pertaining to His power in redeeming His children.

3. Never give an oath when a 'yes' or 'no' is sufficient. (37)

³⁷ Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

Christian simply, to try and manipulate a situation by swearing to some power, is evil for it is self-serving. Just because I think it needs to be said, be



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

careful in anger or jesting, ***I swear to God***... the only reason you would need to say that is because people don't believe you already and if that's the case, swearing to God's name won't make you anymore trustworthy. Yeah, and stop swearing by **dead relatives and on someone's graves**, that's a pagan tradition, they can't hold you to anything, and they belong to God as well. Just let your 'yes' mean that and let your 'no' be binding.

Remember, this **SoM** is given by Jesus and written by Matthew years later, so that we the church would know what a Christian should be like, **it is the description of a Christ follower**. Do you know why a Christian only needs to answer with a 'yes' or a 'no'? Because **their word is bound to the life of Christ**. Their word is trustworthy like Christ's was, their word can be banked on like Jesus' words, their names represent living examples of the gospel to a dead and dying world. Are your words like that, does your name have street cred like that? Can people just take you for your word, or are you having a problem getting people to trust you? It may be you need to go back to the beatitudes again and see if you really are poor in spirit, do you really mourn over your sin, or do you desire the hard work of peace?

I want to leave you with one more oath in the NT, remember I said that Jesus actually took an oath Himself. It came on the night before his death.

Matthew 26:63 & 64 ESV

⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." **⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."**

The answering of the oath means Jesus took it. Yes, you said I am the Christ yourself, so you will be condemned in the future by your own words after you witness my work. Yes, you will see son of man (Messiah) sitting at the right hand of God as if fitting for one who rules. Yes, one day all will see these truths along with all of creation when I come again.

That is what we all believe by faith, He reigns, and He is coming again, and the clarity and power of our speech should display this.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

MP:

**The power of a Christian's Word is
Based in the Power of Christ.**

This advent our **HOPE** is put in that not only were the OT prophecies fulfilled but Jesus Swore He would return. The **PEACE (Zech 8:16-17)** we have received should be given to the world not in false oaths but in our words that displays a trust in our Savior. A Christian lives with this in their heart every day, we know He is coming and in return, our need to lie about things decreases as the power of His Word increases.

You get to speak for Him, you give testimony to the power of His Word, You tell others how He has changed you, You praise His name in song, You live differently in front of this world, so that when you have to give an answer people learn a 'yes' or a 'no' is all they need from you, because you are living for a higher standard outside of yourself. The power of the Christian's testimony is that He means what he says and says what he means, and if they invoke God's name it is to put hope in God's power for Salvation alone.

[CALL TO OBEY]

Matthew 5:19 ESV

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Never give an oath without the intent of keeping it.

I call you to take seriously in whose name you have been baptized, to the act of displaying that name to others. Family, would you consider making your life more open to more people, increase the amount of time in front of others, so they may learn the power of your words of testimony. **Make the commitment to be more in front of people.**

Never give an oath in anyone else's name but God.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

I call you not to swear by anything else under heaven or on the earth except by God's name, thus demonstrating to all, that the earth is His and all in it as well. **Teach these things in your homes, and even when the lost visit teach these things to them as well.**

Never give an oath when a 'yes' or 'no' is sufficient.

Work at not giving false words to others, but instead practice teaching those around you that your yes and no's are final. **Parents**, start by keeping your word with your children, don't give maybes, enforce your no's, and let your children be blessed by the power of Christ in your words. **Young ones**, practice now not giving false truths and practice honesty with all those around you. **Elders** in the church, model and encourage these in the flock as you see fit.

Let's pray together now and ask God to help us learn and embrace this truth.

MP:

**The power of a Christian's Word is
Based in the Power of Christ.**

Prayer

Communion

Matthew 26:26-29 ESV

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus. That as a man he stayed away from making unnecessary oaths, instead He built up the power of His Word by His actions, His miracles, His teachings, and His love for



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

God. Then gave us a name worthy to boast in so we would have no need to make ourselves look good, for He eclipses all our failings in His life, death and resurrection. Praise be to Him for His wonderful love.

Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood. Yes, remember He paid the price for our false boasting, for our lies, and for our work in trying to make ourselves appear acceptable to others. His blood has bought our pardon, His blood has made us clean. Praise be to Him for His wonderful Love.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – "Christians, what do we believe?"

LBCF 23.2 – Lawful Oaths and Vows

People should swear by the name of God alone and only with the utmost holy fear and reverence. Therefore to swear an empty or ill-advised oath by that glorious and awe-inspiring name, or to swear at all by anything else, is sinful and to be abhorred.³ Yet in weighty and significant matters, an oath is authorized by the Word of God to confirm truth and end all conflict.⁴ So a lawful oath should be taken when it is required by legitimate authority in such circumstances.⁵

³[Matthew 5:34, 37](#); [James 5:12](#). ⁴[Hebrews 6:16](#); [2 Corinthians 1:23](#). ⁵[Nehemiah 13:25](#).

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that accepts no false oaths but gladly accepts and is blessed by the praising of His Son.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

Go in the name of the Son, that gave us His Word that He reigns and shall return, all to the glory of His Father.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that convicts us of falsehood, and strengthens our testimony through making our words enough, now go and share this good news with the world.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.16 "Cross my Heart and Hope to Die?"
By Pastor Jody May 12/08/2024

[BIBLIOGRAPHY]

Akin, Daniel L. [*Exalting Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount*](#)/Christ-Centered Exposition. (Brentwood, TN: B&H Publishing, 2019).

Lloyd-Jones, [*Martyn D. Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#)/One Volume Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976).

MacArthur, John. Topical Sermon Series. Grace to You Ministries. *The Spiritual Credibility Gap*. <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2222/the-spiritual-credibility-gap> (May 6, 1979), Web 2024.

Morris, Leon. [*The Gospel according to Matthew*](#)/The New Pillar Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI: Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992).

Stott, John R. [*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*](#)/Revised Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2020).

[*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).