

**When To Say “Yes”
Matthew 5:31-37**

³¹ “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. 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.

When to Say “Yes”

- Will I keep my “yes” when my heart later says “no”?

“...whoever divorces his wife except on the grounds...” – Vs.32

- Am I saying “yes” because I’m afraid to say “no”?

“...you shall not swear falsely” – Vs.33

- Am I saying “yes” while planning “no”?

“...you shall not swear falsely” – Vs.33

- Will this “yes” break an earlier “yes”?

“...shall perform...what you have sworn” – Vs.33

- Will my “yes” reflect God’s “yes”?

“...heaven...is the throne of God...earth...his footstool...” – Vs.34-35

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory
– 2 Corinthians 1:19&20

Small Group Study Guide | Matthew 5:31–37

Getting Started: Name as many sayings and rituals as you can that people use to swear oaths (e.g., “Cross my heart and hope to die...”).

The Big Idea: Oaths aren’t necessarily bad. God makes them (Hebrews 6:13–18), Jesus responds to one (Matthew 26:63–64), and the apostles make them too (2 Corinthians 1:18–19; Galatians 1:20). In fact, God authorized and regulated oaths in the Old Testament to confirm truth and bind people to their word. This was not ideal, but it was helpful. By Jesus’ time, however, the system had been distorted to cover up and perpetuate lies and bad intentions. In our passage, Jesus takes us back to God’s intention for us: to be the kinds of people who need no oaths to convince others that our words are true and our intentions sincere.

Digging Deeper

1. What is an “oath”? See if you can piece together a definition from the description in Hebrews 6:13-18. List the different kinds of oaths we make in life.
2. The big idea of the passage is that we should be the kind of people others wouldn’t need oaths from. What kind of person needs to give them? What kind wouldn’t?
3. Looking at verses 31–37, Jesus links warnings about superficial promises with marriage. What’s the connection, and how does it speak to marriages today?
4. In Sunday’s message, five questions were given to help us know whether we should say “yes” or “no.” Discuss the following four:
 - **Will I keep my “yes” when my heart later says “no”?**
Why is it dangerous to let changing feelings determine whether we keep our commitments? What helps us remain faithful when doing so becomes costly?
 - **Am I saying “yes” because I’m afraid to say “no”?**
Where do you feel pressure to please people? How can an honest “no” be more loving than an unreliable “yes”?
 - **Am I saying “yes” when I really mean “no”?**
What are some ways we give people a false impression without telling an obvious lie? Which of these are easiest for you to justify?
 - **Will this “yes” break an earlier “yes”?**
When has a new commitment competed with an existing responsibility? How can we recognize who will bear the cost of our decisions?
5. In verses 34-36, why does Jesus mention heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and a person’s head? What point is Jesus making about telling the truth and staying true to your word?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 1:18-20. How does God’s faithfulness in Christ give us both a pattern and motivation for becoming people who keep their word?

Making It Real

Which of the sermon’s five questions most challenges you? Identify one concrete step this week, such as correcting a misleading statement, fulfilling a neglected promise, or giving an honest answer. And share how the group can pray for you.