

Panthers:

Have you ever broken your word? When we do so, we say one thing and do another. Our walk doesn't match our talk. In His fourth of *six examples of inside-out righteousness*, Jesus taught His disciples to *be falsehood free*. He said that a disciple's walk should match his talk. In each example, Jesus followed a three-fold pattern: (1) He addressed an Old Testament command saying, "You have heard that it was said;" (2) He alluded to the Pharisees' legalistic interpretation; and (3) He clarified the intent, or spirit, of the law, prefacing His fulfillment with, "But I tell you."

The Old Testament command: "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath'" (Matt. 5:33a). The Old Testament repeated the command that an oath made to God must not be broken. A man was bound to keep his word, doing everything that he said he would do (Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21). His walk was to match his talk. The ninth of the Ten Commandments simply said that one should not lie (Exod. 20:16).

The Legalistic Interpretation: "But keep the oaths you have made to the Lord" (Matt. 5:33b). Following the letter of the law at the expense of the spirit of the law said, "Keep only your oaths sworn to the Lord." Two thousand years ago, Rabbis taught that swearing by things other than God made oaths not binding; thus, providing a loophole to break an oath. People swore by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and their heads, or lives, so that they could later have a loophole to lie. We do the same today. When our word is doubted, we say, "Swear to God." Sometimes we offer a lesser oath, "Swear on the Bible." "Swear on a stack of Bibles." While all the time, we have our fingers crossed.

The Spirit of the Law (Heart): "But I tell you, Do not swear at all... Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No,' 'No'" (Matt. 5:34-37). The spirit of the law is that we would have hearts that are honest, that we would *be truthful*. Jesus said that experiencing the truth sets us free (Jn. 8:32). Similarly, a businessman said, "When I tell the truth, I don't have to remember what I said." When we have hearts that are truthful, our walk matches our talk. We don't need oaths because our word is our bond.

Inside-out righteousness desires the heart of God. God is truthful (Jn. 3:33; Ps. 31:5). Christ is truth (Jn. 14:6). He called the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17). It's Christ's Spirit of truth dwelling in us that allows us to discern truth from falsehood (1 Jn. 4:6).

This week, avoid saying, "Swear on the Bible" or "Swear to God." Rather, let your "Yes" be "Yes" and your "No" be "No." This doesn't mean that you are stubborn or immovable. It means that your word is your bond. Your walk matches your talk. Be truthful, and you won't have to remember what you said.

Truthful,

Mitch