or anyone for people to know what you mean! Therefore, you must not let your words become devalued by saying things you do not mean or by not keeping your words. Surely, such a one who is careful with his/her words and living in the footsteps of Jesus will not need to say more than this. For, Jesus was always trustworthy. Rather, anything more than this is of Satan!

To let your "yes" mean "yes" and your "no" mean "no" is to simply say what you mean and to mean what you say. If you must say more than this for your words to be valuable, then you need to carefully evaluate the ways in which you may have devalued your words in the past. So, rather than looking to make oaths by swearing and promising for someone to know that you mean what you say, simply let your words mean exactly what you say!

What Does It Mean To Let Your "Yes" Mean "Yes"?

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What Does It Mean To Let Your "Yes" Mean "Yes"?

During Jesus's sermon on the mount in Matthew 5-7, Jesus addressed those who make oaths. In doing so, He taught that your "yes" should mean "yes" and your "no" should mean "no" (Matthew 5:33-37). Similarly, James also wrote about not making oaths and letting your "yes" mean "yes" and your "no" mean "no" (James 5:12). Therefore, it is important for us to understand and live by the instructions in these two passages.

1) The common practice of making oaths. Both during Bible times and today, it was and is common for people to make oaths (pledges, promises). In Bible times, as with today, it was common for people to swear by all sorts of different things. People commonly promise and swear to do or not do all sorts of things. And, these oaths are considered to be placed on a higher level than all their other words and statements. For example, whenever someone swears or promises to do

something, it is viewed as being more serious than if someone simply says they will do the thing. Then, there are also degrees in the seriousness of the oath depending on what the person is swearing by. In these ways, people today are not all that different from people in Bible times regarding making oaths.

2) Oaths to God were viewed as important to keep. The Law of Moses plainly taught that oaths that were made to God must be kept to avoid sinning (Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21). So, Jesus stated that His audience had heard such things (Matthew 5:33). However, it seems that oaths that did not invoke the name of God were viewed as less binding than ones that did. For example, the text seems to indicate that people would swear by Heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by their own heads, etc. (Matthew 5:34-35). So, this resulted in the devaluation of vows (Matthew 23:16-22). The same can be seen today as people make many promises and say all kinds of things they don't really mean.

3) Do not make oaths. Those who would make oaths should recognize that swearing by things they believed to be less significant did not make the oath less binding. For, swearing by Heaven was to swear by God's throne. Swearing by earth was God's footstool. Swearing by Jerusalem was the city of the great King (Matthew 5:34-35). So, it all has connections with God (as everything good does). Then, swearing by one's own head was meaningless because one could not even change the color of a single hair (Matthew 5:36). So, Jesus's solution was simply not to make oaths so as to think that doing such should make a person's words valuable.

4) Jesus's followers should say what they mean and mean what they say. Instead of relying on making oaths for someone to know you mean what you say (or even to make certain kinds of oaths), Jesus's solution is for your "yes" to really mean "yes" and for your "no" to really mean "no" (Matthew 5:37; James 5:12). That is, let every one of your words be valuable. Use your words in such a way so that you do not need to swear on anything