

Chapter 29: New Year's Resolutions

Life Application Verses:

Matthew 5: 33-37 (NIV): ³³“Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’ ³⁴But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. ³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.”

What a way to start this out, eh? Let your yes be yes and your no be no. You know who said this? Jesus Christ Himself. You should read the entire 5th Chapter of Matthew to see what Jesus was talking about in these verses. Our Lord and Savior spoke to us through the ages, and what He said in those some two thousand plus years is as needed today as it was in His present day Israel. But let me explain what this topic is all about.

Every year, we come to a new one. In December of 2014, we will approach the 31st at the end of 2014, and the beginning of 2015. Same thing in 2015; it ends, a new one begins. And every year, we make New Year's Resolutions—or many of us do. I've stopped doing them because I am a miserable failure at it, okay!!! What we need to do or learn to do is precisely what Jesus instructed us to do—that is, say what we mean by saying what we mean. Do it with tact, but if you can't do something, say so; if you can, say that as well...no fence-sitting!

Here is where the rubber meets the road: as Christians, and I don't mean 'play christians', but those who have given themselves to Jesus as a true act of submission of Heart, Mind, Body, and Soul, if we live Matthew 5: 33-37, then when we say we Believe that is precisely a, “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’” truth. IN other words, if you are a Christian, there is no compromise. As I write these words, the following story has been released about a woman of Faith who refuses to denounce her Faith. By the time you read this, the story may have changed, but the outcome or the basis of its reality will have brought Matthew 5: 33-37 to full fruition. Read the following story line:

Source: (<http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/27/world/africa/sudan-christian-woman-apostasy/>)

(CNN) – A Sudanese woman sentenced to die for refusing to renounce her Christianity gave birth to a baby girl in prison Tuesday, her lawyers said. Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, 27, delivered her baby at a women's prison in Khartoum, but her husband was not allowed to be present for the birth, sources told CNN. They asked not to be named for safety reasons. Ibrahim was convicted of apostasy, or the renunciation of faith, about two weeks ago while she was eight months pregnant. A Sudanese lawyer filed an appeal last week to reverse the verdict by the lower court. She is in prison with her 20-month-old son, but Sudanese officials have said the toddler is free to leave any time, according to her lawyer, Mohamed Jar Elnabi. Her husband, Daniel Wani, is a U.S. citizen who uses a wheelchair and "totally depends on her for all details of his life," her lawyer said.

I ask you, myself, and every Christian, to ponder what these words represent. Would we have this courage to say, Yes and mean Yes. Do we have the courage on our jobs, in our families, or when the city in which we live decides to remove the Name of Christ at Christmas just before our New Year's Resolutions, to stand firm on our Christian Faith? Jesus said...no, let me change that: Jesus instructed us to not to swear an oath, but to say what we mean and let our actions validate our convictions. For example, I will use my own experiences here. From time-to-time, I will be in my classroom teaching and an opportunity presents itself to use the Name of God or Jesus in a discussion. My conviction of service to God in Christ is that I say Yes because I meant Yes to God in Service and I meant Yes to Salvation in Jesus, not Yes some of the time, but Yes all of the time. But do I have the courage of Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, the Sudanese woman we just read about? When she said Yes to her Faith in Christ Jesus, her yes was a resounding Yes. IN other words, when we said Yes to God in Christ Jesus, what does that imply in our lives? It means we are consistent in Faith and Service and reaching the Lost.

You might ask the question: "Well, we can't always say yes to all questions and inquiries because there must be shades of grayish-yes." I say No because I mean No. Jesus didn't say that, did he? No (and that means No Absolute.) Jesus said that you don't need to emphasize your commitment by swearing to something to ensure your listeners think you are a great person of character; rather, Jesus said that is accomplished by just stating the obvious. Yes or No. I recently was asked to attend a community service clean-up at an Elementary School. I said yes, then I got to thinking about how much fun it would be to sleep in and have a lazy day and my yes—I'm being completely transparent here, unlike what we hear from Washington...okay,

I'm sorry I brought that up—began to have shades of gray around the edges. Then, I talked it over with my wife, who is a pragmatist, and she recited the phrase to me we so often forget: "You said you would do it, so go and do it." Wow! Backwards again. !Wow. She was right, and I went, and I am glad that I did. That work was shared by many of us, we worked hard, and the children attending had a really nice facelift out front, which made the school look wonderful—because the team of volunteers decided that their yes would be yes. Period.

Instead of New Year's Resolutions, why don't we Christians live Perpetual Resolutions. These are those things we read in God's Word that says—that Jesus said—"Stop swearing and just say what you mean!" What kind of world would we live in if we just said what we mean, we did what we said we would do, and we were Faithful in all things before God. Then again, this just might end our beloved New Year's Resolutions. It's not a new year—the number changes—but it is just another day in our lives. Our lives should be lived as if Jesus was coming back tomorrow, every day. We should be thrilled to have another day, every day. We should be thankful that God has Given us a way to Eternal Life, every day. Our yes's should be yes, and our no's should be no, every day. When we tell our wives or husbands that we love them, that means yes because it is yes, every day. When we tell our boss we worked 8 hours, that means we worked 8 hours, every day (and when the boss tells us something, that yes or no should mean what he or she says, in fairness, every day). When our children or grandchildren tell us they need us, and we say yes to that need, we mean yes and we put action into it, every day. When we tell someone we Prayed for them, we Prayed for them, because when we say yes, our yes is an action verb—EVERY DAY! I, for one, believe that when Jesus said for us to say yes to mean yes and no to mean no, He did not give us instruction for how to live by ignoring His command. He meant what He said, and He gave us a prime example of how to live Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good—EVERY DAY! His instruction was not about New Year's Resolutions, but about Life Resolutions—EVERY DAY! And, EVERY DAY—think about this: what if Jesus had said, "I will be crucified for your Sins. All of them...forever. I will be on that Cross so that you do not have to be. I am your substitute. My answer to that Sacrifice is Yes. And my answer to your Salvation in Me is Yes." What if He had said Maybe! Think about this!! Jesus told us how to live in the Life Application Verses.

His Yes was Yes! Not Maybe or let me think about it! (Sorry, about this long paragraph, but had to stay on point!)

Let me give you another personal example, and I am sure you have just as many that you can bring to the discussion. My granddaughter, Kota Bear, loves to play games and other things, because her Kindergarten classes don't get to 'play' as much as her Pre-school classes did. So, when she gets home or comes to stay with TaterPop and Nana, it's "TaterPop, I want to play school." I will be home from work or doing yard work and be tired, but you know something about my response? If I say Yes, she will take that to Fort Knox, as if that those three words are 24K Solid Gold. If I hem haw around, dabble elsewhere, or delay, she comes to find me and she unequivocally reminds me that, "TaterPop, let's play school!!!" You see, Jesus told us to be honest in our words, not to swear or make oaths, but just to state the obvious: "Yes, I will play with you Kota Bear. No, Kota Bear, TaterPop has to cut the grass and then he will play." Why is it so difficult to state what should be an easy response? I could so easily wax philosophical about many things in life—politics, leadership, etc.,--as they pertain to this topic, but I will leave that to another time or age or administration or _____ (you fill in the blank).

A Yes is a Yes, Unless, Unless...
Ken Scott

As I do so often, my words I use,
I'd like to say yes, refuse, refuse
Even so, yes I say, no I mean, go away,
Oh God forgive me, I Pray, I Pray
A yes is a yes, unless, unless...

The neighbor says, can you help me out,
Of course, I quip, I shout, I shout
He waits for hours, they turn to days,
He shakes his head, amazed, amazed
A yes is a yes, unless, unless...

My wife needs help, 'I'll be right there',
I take my time, the stare, the stare
Earned I did, that glare from she,
My yes too long, I see, I see
A yes is a yes, unless, unless...

Just a little poem I wrote for the occasion. Hope it adds to the incentive to Speak Truth. And Life. And Salvation to the Lost. And...
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My son likes catch, 'Dad, throw with thee',
Yes I say, busy me, busy me
He waits for me, till catch is lost,
My son is hurt, the cost, the cost
A yes is a yes, unless, unless...

Daughter mine, 'Dad, shop with thee',
Yes I say, busy me, busy me
She waits for me, till shopping is lost,
My daughter is hurt, the cost, the cost
A yes is a yes, unless, unless...

Too often we speak, a yes for no,
Our life is the wind, I know, I know
For love of our loved, let yes be yes,
That they not ponder, I guess, I guess
A yes is a yes, unless, unless...

As I do now often, I say what I say,
When I say yes, it's today, it's today
If I say no, you will know the why,
God Help me do right, I cry, I cry
A yes is a yes, unless, unless...
I follow my Jesus, and pass this test,
For in His words, a yes is a yes.

The poem doesn't just apply to family, as I've mentioned, but to all of our lives. However, our ability to say yes or no and be there for our family is surely important. Just as our yes or no to Christ is Eternal. While it is terrible to hurt a family member by not being there for them when we could have because we allowed other things to get in the way, saying no to Jesus is Eternal loss. You can say Yes to Jesus right where you are. Whether in your home, at work, driving, fishing—it doesn't matter—saying Yes to Jesus is not a Life Resolution, it is an Eternal Evolution. You will be Born Again and Life Everlasting is a whopping YES that is an ETERNAL YES. This applies to Salvation, and our life's work for God in Christ Jesus.

Before I conclude, I wanted to leave you with hope that you can use to remain Faithful to our Savior's teachings. If we need to condition our yes or no based on some event(s), then I think we're good on the outcome(s). For instance, always let your yes be yes, and your no be

no, but if something legitimate predicates this decision, then it does not negate our response. If I want to participate in an outdoor community service project, but on the morning of the activity a thunderstorm is flooding the streets and lightning is in the area, my yes was yes, but the condition of that yes had actual mitigating circumstances. However, if my original response was yes, but I Pray for a thunderstorm, well...I'll just leave that interpretation to your Good Graces. I think you know the premise of this idea and that the latter portion is 'agin The Book.'

Finally, let me reiterate the Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good aspect. It should be that the world is a safe place, where we can Trust one another to keep our word, i.e., your yes is yes and your no is no, with legitimate factors that influence the response. However, as you know, our world is anything but a safe, Trusting place to live, and this is significant outside the delimiters of God's Love, Mercy, and Grace for Born Again Believers in Christ Jesus. For we Christians, we should be particularly careful with our dealings with each other (and with non-believers, so don't misunderstand) by saying what we can and cannot do, based on actual events that impact our intentions. I think Jesus in Matthew 5: 33-37 provided us that foundation of Brotherhood and Sisterhood by His words. I hope that our deeds (and mine also) follow our words. If we say we can be a Prayer Partner at our local churches, let our yes be yes in Prayer, not sometime Prayer, but consistent with the Words of our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. Remember: when He said He would be Crucified on the Cross, Buried, and Resurrected on the Third Day, He kept His word. His Yes was Yes to our Salvation. This is the Heavenly Minded guide we must live by in order to be Earthly Good in our relationships with all people. May my Yes be Yes, and my No be No with Tact, Christian Love, Compassion, Intent, and in following the Words of Jesus.

A Question of Curiosity:

In Matthew 5: 33-37, Jesus gave the Guide to live a Life of Integrity, Honor, and Character. It was a simple premise He offered, but reaches to the core of our Lives. Do you see the deeper and far-reaching meaning Christ provided? And you say...

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This quote was already used, but seems appropriate for what Jesus instructed to do in the Life Application Verses: "We are the Bibles the world is reading; We are the creeds the world is needing; We are the sermons the world is heeding." ~ *Billy Graham* ~

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