SLIGO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Discipleship 201

Session 4: *Let Your Yes Mean Yes*

Matthew 5:33-37

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' **34** But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; **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 swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. **37** All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

James 3:5

Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

John 8:32

The truth shall set you free.

Summary:

While Jesus begins this teaching by addressing a common practice of his time, he brings it to a conclusion with a universal principle for all of his disciples. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. He encourages his followers to say what they mean and mean what they say—at all times. Deceit, of all kinds, is so common in our world that we often have to insist that we are telling the truth in order for people to believe us. And while many of us would not tell a blatant lie, we have likely become very comfortable manipulating the truth to suit our own purposes. In fact, we learn at an early age that words have power and can be used to get what we want or deflect what we don't want. Most of us, as our lives progress, become experts at using words to control.

What we fail to see is how our inability to speak the truth harms our own soul and places us in bondage. How many of our physical ailments come from never speaking our truth or confronting someone with it. How many people in our world live enslaved to the wishes and wims and even the abuse of others because they have never learned to

speak honestly in all things. And how many of us enslave ourselves, trying to speak only what we think others will want to hear in hopes that they may like us and view us favorably.

It's no wonder that Jesus later declared, "the truth shall set you free." When we can just answer people simply and honestly, even if we know it's not what they want to hear, it is very freeing for us. And while we may fear their reaction, we forget that we are also earning their respect and trust when we are honest with them.

Quotes:

The tongue is our most powerful weapon of manipulation. A frantic stream of words flows from us because we are in a constant process of adjusting our public image. We fear so deeply what we think other people see in us that we talk in order to straighten out their understanding. —Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

It is easier to be silent altogether than to speak with moderation. —Thomas á Kempis

One lie ruins a thousand truths. —Ghanaian Proverb

Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention, in His conversation with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. —Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*

Discussion Questions:

What are some reasons we may say some things that aren't entirely true?

Why do we say things to give the impression we agree with someone when really we do not?

What are we afraid of that keeps us from speaking the truth when we know we should?

How do you feel when you believe that someone is lying to you? How do you feel when someone tells you what they think you want to hear instead of their honest opinion?

How can we improve our speaking so that it is simple, honest, and always in the spirit of love?

Homework:

Your **practice** for this week is to set aside a minimum of 15 minutes each day to reflect on the following Scripture.

Day 1: Reflect on Matthew 5:33-37. For this week, try to simply speak the truth (in love) in all of your conversations. Notice any fear that may come and pray for peace to be able to speak your truth. Notice how freeing it is when you live this way.

Day 2: Read James 3:2-10. James does not mince words on the power of the tongue for evil. Have you ever said things that you regret? How can you learn from those painful experiences? Ask God for forgiveness and make a commitment today to speak in love.

Day 3: Reflect on John 8:31,32. Many live of us live in fear of what others will think of us if we speak our truth. Whether it's in our marriage, with family members, a boss or just other acquaintances in our lives, we fear their rejection if we actually express our thoughts. What would it feel like to be free to share our honest selves with others? Write down one first step you can take—maybe one conversation you can have—to practice speaking your truth. It takes practice to gain the courage to do it all the time.

Day 4: Reflect on the Ellen White quote above. How can you be more like Jesus? What do you need to do to make sure your speech is more like Him?

Day 5: Reflect on Matthew 5:33-37. How have you done this week in letting your "yes" be "yes" and "no" mean "no"? Did you take any risks in speaking your truth this week? How did it feel? Do you want to continue in this freedom that Jesus gives you? If so, commit to continue this simple, loving honesty in all your relationships and interactions.