

Birtherd from Evil – Collide

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MAIN VERSES

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

So, this week, we are continuing the Collide series. We are exploring one of the greatest collections of Yeshua's teachings from the Sermon on the Mount. And Yeshua, this teacher, this rabbi from Galilee that wandered around preaching, what did he preach? When he was baptized, went through the wilderness, he started this ministry around Galilee. What was the one thing that was central to his preaching? The gospel of the kingdom, the kingdom of God. And I know I harp on that every week, and there's a reason. Because I want you to get to the point and be like, gosh, Matt, we know that Yeshua preached a new type of kingdom that was being birthed on this world. And it was different than the kingdoms of this world. It was the kingdom and the reign of God above. And I'm hammering that on purpose.

King Jesus and the Kingdom

And he's proclaiming this new and this radical and this redemptive kingdom, this power that's coming from above, and it's the kingdom of God. And the reign and justice of God manifests in a world that had never seen it before. And he's proclaiming that this kingdom is being birthed, not in the future, sometime, way off in the future, in a galaxy long ago. No, he's proclaiming that this kingdom is being birthed now. And even now, it is among you. And he preaches, or the apostolic writings, they tell us that not only is he speaking of this new kingdom that's being birthed, he's the king. He's the king of it. King Yeshua, or King Jesus. That's what the word Christ means. It means king, the anointed one, the anointed king. And so when the writers of the New Testament wrote Jesus Christ, as we read in all of our translations, they were not

saying that this was his first and last name. He would not be formally approached as Mr. Christ, but Christ would be fitting. They were proclaiming him with his name and his title as king. And so every time you read Jesus Christ, you should think King Jesus or King Yeshua. It's what the phrase means.

And his pursuit was to show forth a world that no one had ever seen, a world of humans that fulfill their mandate as image bearers, from the beginning, a world of humans that participate in the creation of God as fully human beings, walking out what it means to be someone who is committed to building relationships with other people and other image bearers, edifying them and showing God's love in a world of darkness. So Yeshua has come to reclaim creation, if you will, to take it back. And not only that, but he's also coming to bring a new creation. And when we choose to do that, to walk after the teachings of this Yeshua, what happens? We collide. We very much collide with the world around us.

And that's what Yeshua invites us to do. Collide with the world that says that God's love is not enough. Collide with the world that thinks that they do not need a sovereign king. Collide with the world that doesn't believe that we're any more important than the animals. Collide with the world that says there is no King Jesus. That's what we're invited to do by this rabbi sitting on a hill preaching a sermon.

The Kingdom Standard

And so the Sermon on the Mount is a collection of teachings where Yeshua is inaugurating this kingdom standard. He's laying out the standard. And he's explaining what a kingdom people look like. So if you are part of this kingdom, here is what your heart looks like, and here is what you look like, and here is what your life looks like. This is what a [Jeremiah 31](#) people looks like when God's will and his law is written and imprinted on their hearts. And this is what the transformation is supposed to look like, or at least the journey, right?

And there's a core issue here that he's speaking about. Lots of rabbis are going around speaking about how to fulfill the Torah and how to fulfill these commandments of God in the Torah. And you can keep Sabbath very strictly, like the Pharisees did. And you can make sure there's no pork enzymes in your cheese. And you can have a camping trip in the fall. And you can have a fancy dinner in the spring every year.

The Heart Must Change

Yeshua in His Sermon on the Mount is not simply presenting that person; he's presenting someone who is actually, in some way, shape, or form, actually fulfilling the Torah. Not just a person that has good behavior. Not just a person that uses God's commandments as a checklist. Yeshua knows that our behavior can change on a whim. But if the heart is unchanged, then it's all worthless. It's a fraud. It's a fraud.

And so we've discussed the connection of the Sermon on the Mount with [Jeremiah 31](#) in this series. We've discussed anger and murder. We've discussed lust, divorce, the things that disrupt and cripple relationships, and the way that God intended us to engage with one another and with Him. And this week, we're discussing one of those challenging areas that some of us struggle with: anger. Right? No one, maybe? Sometimes we get upset. I mean, has anyone ever gotten upset before? And some of us struggle with anger. Some of us struggle with lust. It's part of the human condition. Some of us struggle with domineering our marriages and not loving and not honoring our spouses. And these are all results of the human condition we find ourselves in.

But Yeshua, Yeshua, he invites you. He invites you, just like his disciples, to put ourselves under his reign. And the good news of this that he preaches is that you can discover your humanity again in Yeshua. And you can discover what it means to have solid, responsible relationships with others. And you can discover what it means to be a receptacle of love and mercy to other people.

And this week, I dare say, we're going to explore something that affects all of us. All of us. And I dare say that every single one of us here struggles with this. Most of the time, it's probably subconscious. We don't even realize you do it. So you ready? I'm ready. Okay.

An Ancient Struggle

So if you're following me with these scriptures, please turn to Matthew chapter 5, which is where the sermon starts. And we're going to skip down to verse 33.

It's incredible. I have a different view than you guys. I get to see we have a couple people that bring traditional Bible. It's very thick. Lots of trees in it. And you're flipping through and you can hear it. And then you have everyone else that just got it, right? It's fascinating. I love technology and how it affects society. It's interesting.

So [Matthew 5](#), 33, and this is Yeshua speaking. Jesus speaking. He says, Again, you have heard that it was said of those of old, you shall not swear falsely. But shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne

of God, or by earth, for it is the footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no. Anything more that comes from this comes from evil.

Oaths, vows, and the birthing of something from evil. You excited? What? Oaths? Yeshua is speaking about something that, if we're honest, we have no clue about in our world. When was the last time you guys took an oath, right? Maybe it was with your hand on the Bible or something, I solemnly swear. Maybe you took a vow when you got married, right? Not too, too often. This is not a practice that is relevant to us today as it was in the first century in the ancient Near East. And in any way, shape, or form, because of that, we typically gloss over this section.

The Real Issue Behind the Oath

How many of you have read this section and been like, okay, well yes, an oath—okay, I won't take oaths and I'll say yes and no and I'll try to mean it most of the time. Yeah, so we could check out and explore what it meant to take a vow in the first century. We could check out the in-depth customs of ancient Israel, ancient Babylon, and Sumer, of what it meant to take an oath in the ancient Near East. But the reality is there's a cultural disconnect between us and this practice and what we're supposed to gain from it today.

So in verse 33 here, Yeshua does something kind of interesting. He doesn't quite quote a specific commandment in the Torah as he does in some of his other antitheses. He kind of gives an overview of the section of the Torah about taking oaths and vows, which are several different scriptures. And essentially, what the Bible says: don't break a vow. That's what the Torah says. God commands that don't break a vow. It's a bad thing if you swear on something and you break it. And whatever you do, don't swear by the name of God and break a vow because that's like really bad. So if you want to explore that, [Deuteronomy 23](#), 21 through 23, just kind of reviews that and so does [Leviticus 19](#), 12.

So this practice of what he's speaking about and why he is a bit critical of it goes something like this. Okay, story time. Let's say that you're a fisherman. Where did Jesus fish? Galilee. So you're a fisherman in Galilee, and you go out every day, and you fish in this Sea of Galilee, and you catch fish, and it's great.

And let's say that you're over here, and over here is Shlomo. Shlomo is also a fisherman. Guess where Shlomo also fishes? In the Sea of Galilee. And every single day, Shlomo gets up, he gets his boat prepped, and he goes out to fish. And he looks over, and who does he see catching all

of the fish? You. Shlomo does not like you very much. Because Shlomo thinks that you're catching all his fish. And Shlomo doesn't like that you catch more fish than him. And Shlomo doesn't like that your fish are prettier than his. And Shlomo just has this piece of bitterness that is just kind of evolving within him. Okay?

The Fishing Net Hole

So one day, he goes out to his boat and he finds that his net that he fishes with has a hole in it. It's a riveting story, right? You guys, stay with me. Has a hole in it. Is obviously responsible for this hole in Shlomo's fishing net. It's got to be you. It's got to be you. He doesn't like you. He gets jealous when you catch all the fish, the pretty fish. He just does not like you. What a perfect... Of course, you came over and put a hole in his net so that you could put him out of the fish business. Because you're just a jerk. So he goes down to the town elders and he says that you vandalized his fishing net and there needs to be judgment. There needs to be swift justice that happens here against you. And they ask him, how do you know that they poked a hole in your net? Well, because it had to be them, he says. They're my competition. They have a motive to do it. It had to be them. Yeah, but Shlomo, did you see them do it? So all of a sudden, this story that he's telling with all of this passion, it may get kind of rewritten in his head. Yeah, I saw them do it. That was them. I saw them come out and tear a hole in my net. Like I was from a distance, but I know it was you. I know it was you. Okay. Juices are flowing, and he's just going into this story. And are you sure you saw them, Shlomo? No. Yes, I swear by the name of Yahweh and every sacrifice on the holy altar, I saw them poke a hole in my net.

What It Means to Swear by God's Name

So what just happened? That was the end of the story. So what just happened? Shlomo is bringing a judgment, and in order to back the judgment and give it severe, gross credibility, he invokes the name of God as a seal of his integrity and his claim in this proceeding. And it's the idea of benefiting from kind of association. So if God is good and God is just and God is set apart and God is the ultimate king and judge, then invoking his name, you're associated with him. Now your accusation has the same level. You're trying to take the status of God on your accusation to like pinky promise that you're telling the truth and somehow making your claim more legitimate. And this is totally cool to do in the Bible. Totally cool to do. Swearing and making oaths was a pretty typical thing to do in the ancient Near East when the Torah was written. But what is the problem here? What's the problem?

The problem is Shlomo did not see you poke a hole in his net. In fact, the next day, the elders are going out and they're investigating, and this is huge, looking for evidence. And they find out that his teenage boy brought some friends over and they were playing on the boat on Shlomo's day off, and they were messing with the net and they got caught in a nail and it tore a hole in the net.

Profaning God's Name

Now, in ancient Israel, in the ancient world, swearing was a big deal. It was like signing a contract, and it was legally binding. And God speaks and he warns about doing this when you use his name and associating your corrupt ways with his name. What did Shlomo do? He took God's reputation as a casual thing and used it to cover up his dishonesty in accusing you of tearing a hole in his net. And so in the Torah, [Leviticus 19, 12](#), God speaks. And he speaks in this very issue. And he says, you shall not swear by my name falsely. Did Shlomo use God's name in a false manner? As a false collateral, if you will. He did. What happens if you use God's name falsely? You profane the name of your God. I am Lord. Okay, so here God commands his followers, if and when they use God's name for swearing, if they do it, they had better make good on their claim. And if you don't make good on your claim, if your actions are outside the scope of this thing you endorsed using God's name, who loses the most? Who loses the most? God's name does. When you break an oath that was sworn by God's name, his name becomes less valuable. You see that? His reputation is no longer credible. You depreciate the value of God's name. And thus, you profane it. You take it in vain.

This leads us to another verse in [Exodus 20](#) during the Ten Commandments. And... And it states, you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Or some modern translations may say, do not misuse the name of the Lord. It's the third commandment. So if we compare the intention in [Leviticus 19.12](#), what are we dealing with here? We're dealing with a mishandling, not of God's name necessarily, but what his name represents. We're dealing with a mishandling of God's reputation based on our actions and our integrity. When you take God's name and you put it as collateral for your actions, yeah, it takes it in vain.

Carrying God's Reputation

So if you're known by the God of Israel, if you claim to be a follower of the God of Israel, you carry God's name, you carry God's reputation with you as a follower, right? That's what an image bearer does. And the moment where our actions and our behavior leaves the scope of

integrity, that's the moment that we profane his name and we take it in vain. I'm sure you guys have seen this in real life. It's like having one of those I Love Jesus bumper stickers on the back of your car at the same time as you see someone flipping the bird at someone else in traffic. Who loses in that deal? Who loses the most? Jesus' reputation is now diminished because of the actions of those who claim to follow him. We have to be careful with that. When you claim to be a Christian or a Christ follower, a follower of the king or a follower of the God of Israel, you're wearing that jersey. You're wearing the jersey, and people see you like that, and it has God's name written on the jersey, God's reputation. And so swearing in the Bible is what we see, Shlomo do, in the story, and God's name is taken in vain when we take it, exploit it, and somehow bolster our claims through it, our assertions, and make ourselves seem more important than we really are at someone else's expense.

And we take something holy and pure and we mix it with something crooked, selfish, and twisted, which are our motives. And this is what defiles the name of God. Like the whole idea here with oaths, as Scott McKnight would say, he says, "...oaths assume a world in which honesty must be promised, implying that honesty is not always present." So we use God's name as collateral on our promise that we are honest. The root of the issue is we are buying into the idea that we need to prove our honesty, and the reason why we feel the need to use God's name to do it only contributes to the low integrity levels of our own word.

The Workaround

So what do you do if you want to bolster your claims? What do you do if you're not really an honest person, but you want to make a claim, or you want to make a deal with someone, or you want to try to persuade someone into believing your presentation towards them? What if you want to do all of this, but you don't want to break the commandment of swearing by God's name because you might break it. What do you do then? Well, you swear by something associated with the name of God, of course, but technically isn't. This was a practice that actually happened and evolved within ancient Israel and within the first century specifically. Everyone knew to respect God's name. Everyone knew to keep God's name holy. So much so that they began to practice... not vocalizing it. By the first century, people did not say any vocalization of the name of God. No one around saying Yahweh or any variations of that because we don't want to defile the name of God. We won't even swear by the name of God. Let's just stay away from the name of God and that'll keep it set apart and holy. And so what they began doing is they began swearing on things other than the name of God. Yeshua named some here in [Matthew 5](#). Heaven, earth, I swear by Jerusalem. I swear by my own head and the

hairs that are on my head. It's creative. And this was just the tip of the iceberg. This spawned many different debates that we see later in [Matthew 23](#). Can you imagine how idiotic this seems? Like if this was happening today, like, listen, I swear to God this way. Oh, no, no, no, you can't swear by God. Okay, I swear by the church down the street because it's a holy place where people come to worship God. Okay, that's okay. Yeah, but what denomination is it because that one might not count for the credibility? Okay, well, I swear by the Messianic Fellowship down the street. Ooh, that's better. But that's even too close because Messianic, they're really holy. So that's just too holy. That's up there with God. So what do we got? Okay, well, I swear by the seats that are in the Messianic fellowship down the road that my intentions are pure and I'm honest.

Looking for Loopholes

And then they would discuss that. This was something that happened in religious circles. We debate about what to do with children at the border. They were debating if they could swear on pews in the church as opposed to the actual pew, or things likened to that. Okay, I swear by the white hair on my head. It shows my wisdom, my life, my integrity as someone of older age. How is that collateral for anything?

And so this was something that actually took place, and we're going to explore [Matthew 23](#) in just a moment, where Yeshua criticizes the Pharisees for doing that. So if you swear by Yahweh, you have to be very, very sure of the integrity of your claim and honesty behind it. Because that's what Yeshua is approaching here. He's dealing with honesty. And if you swear by the temple, maybe there's some wiggle room to be a little bit more dishonest. Because, I mean, at least you're not swearing by the name of God, right? It's a real debate. How honest do you have to be before you start trying to reach for things to make your claims more credible?

Matthew 23: You're Always Swearing by God

So in [Matthew 23](#), we have Yeshua, and he is raking the Pharisees on their idea that God can be made happy by a checklist and that it's not really a deep-rooted heart issue—that they can just look pretty on the outside, but on the inside, they're just rotten and nothing's changed. And he says:

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing. But if anyone swears by the gold in the temple, he's bound by the oath. You fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has the gold in it and makes it sacred? And you say, if anyone swears by

the altar, it is nothing. But anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he's bound by the oath. You blind men, which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whosoever swears by the temple swears by it and him who dwells in it. And whosoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God who sits upon it."

So Yeshua is exposing this attitude—that you feeling the need to swear is the issue. By looking for loopholes or ways to spin things, using words to evade commitment, giving the impression of one thing and doing another—it doesn't matter. And when you swear on anything, it defiles the name of God if you're a follower of God. You swearing by the gold in the temple? No. So you could avoid swearing by the temple. It doesn't work. You swear on earth? Who made earth? God. You swear on your white hair? Who made your hair? God, right?

So Yeshua is addressing something that many of us do every single day, and we don't realize it. He's arguing that despite what you swear by, you're always swearing by God's name. Always. And there's one more false impression here. Yeshua is arguing that despite what you swear by, it's clear that you feel the need to swear by something because something is wrong on the inside.

The Deeper Issue Behind the Oath

And there's a great book by author Dallas Willard called *The Divine Conspiracy*. It's a smaller book that goes over the Sermon on the Mount, and I highly recommend it along with Scott McKnight's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount for this topic. But I have a quote here from Dallas Willard, and if you listen to what he says, he brings out the inner essence of what Yeshua is arguing here. And he says: "It is not just that swearing..." In other words, he's suggesting that whenever you try to swear by God's name, that alone isn't the issue. The issue is what you're trying to do to the person you're talking to. Why did Shlomo feel the need to assert God's name in his charge against you? Because he wanted to sell the people. He wanted to sell the judges and sell the elders on his assertion. He wanted to sell it for more than it really was.

Dallas Willard continues:

"This is wrong. It is unlike God, and just making sure you perform any promises made to God in the course of it does not make it right. Of course you should keep promises you make to God in any circumstances, but the wrongness of swearing lies deeper. We are making use of people, trying to bypass their understanding and judgment to trigger their will to possess them for our purposes."

Everybody get all that? What he said—the only reason you would have a need to say, "Okay, but I swear on the altar. Or I swear by the Thanksgiving offering calf being offered in the room. Or the daily offerings on the temple. I swear by that offering that this transaction will proceed like this"—why are you reaching for that if not to sell someone on a deal that isn't adequate enough on its own?

Swearing casually is a form of manipulation, and the aim is to impress someone with just how serious you are so that you can make a gain from it. It's there to stonewall the judgment and input of others so that we can use them or the situation for our own agenda and our own purposes. It's a song and dance. You guys familiar with that term—song and dance? Yeah. When you spin something a certain way to hide what is really going on behind the scenes.

Why We Feel the Need to Swear

Who cares if you swear by heaven or earth? The deeper issue is why you feel the need to do it. You guys ever seen those local car commercials from car dealerships? And not like the new car dealerships such as Lexus or BMW, because those commercials typically go with some dramatic music and there's forest footage that flows around you and you hear—and then there's this beautiful car, shiny, and it's got the helicopter view that comes out of the back of the car. "Get your Lexus or BMW for \$339 a month with this two-year lease." Captions everywhere, and all you see is this beautiful piece of machinery. Yeah, I want to go fast in that.

So contrast that to local car dealerships. Where typically you have a car sitting there and a guy standing in front of it or beside it with no footage of the car moving or being dramatic. There's no added sound effects. There's a number that's flashing on the bottom of the screen and you don't have a lot of footage of the car, but what you do have is on top of the car hood there's a towel with a big fluffy dog sitting there. Anybody ever seen those? There's just always dogs in a car commercial, right? And what is the purpose of that? Why did they put a big mutt on the car they want you to purchase?

Because they know that you most likely like big, puffy, cute pooches a lot more than you like a car salesman talking to you and trying to pitch a deal in the middle of eating your ice cream at 9 o'clock at night or whatever you're watching. And so they think, well, maybe they'll look at the dog and hear the pitch. Or maybe they'll look at the dog and have these warm feelings, and somehow associate those feelings with coming down and buying a used Honda. Yeah.

A Song and a Dance

See, Yeshua's saying that this is not about the words that you use, and this isn't about the words that you can swear by and jumping through hoops to fulfill some technicalities. What Yeshua is saying is that there's a core issue behind this motive where we are not being honest with each other. And we are presenting something differently or manipulating the presentation of something from what it really is. We're taking our yes and our no and twisting them to be something a little bit different. And whatever we are presenting in this manner is false. The way we are living is not what we're presenting. And the reason why it isn't is because we want to change what others see for our gain. It's a song and it's a dance. It's a song and a dance. And Yeshua says that this behavior is birthed from evil.

I saw a McDonald's commercial the other day that had laughing kids and families running around all smiling, having a great picnic. And they showed this double quarter pounder with cheese. And they kept saying in that commercial: "It's 100% burger. It's 100% flavor. I'm loving it. Flavor. 100."

Did you guys hear that? It's 100% flavor. Flavor. As opposed to what, I don't know. But it sounded fantastic, right? And why do they have the smiling kids and the families all coming together? There's this exaggerated description that we don't even know what it means. The idea is that you'll associate good feelings of family and cohesiveness, happy children, with getting the most delicious burger ever for \$3.

What's Really Being Sold

You wouldn't show the guy holding his stomach two hours later because of the gas it caused. You wouldn't show that. In the commercial, you wouldn't show statistics of type 2 diabetes in children, you know? Like, do burgers make some people happy? I don't know. I'm a fan of hamburgers. But this isn't the whole truth being presented. McDonald's tastes good. Sure it does. But—

What is happening and what Yeshua is addressing is a song and dance. It's a modern day example of a song and dance. It's trying to show you one side of something while intentionally hiding everything else. And when you use things to manipulate the presentation of yourself or what you're presenting—to make it look only its absolute best—you're putting on a show.

And the reason why this is such a big deal is because we're not being honest with each other in our relationships, which is something that Yeshua came to restore. And we are presenting a false or not 100% true aspect of our struggles or whatever it is. And if Yeshua's goal is to demonstrate not only the kingdom of God, but to demonstrate participation in the kingdom of

God and what that looks like, then this behavior is something that goes completely against the goal of having a community of believers that has strong, healthy, and honest relationships built on love. You cannot have that relationship and hide from that at the same time.

Honesty to Others and Honesty with Yourself

The issue is honesty. Honesty to others and honesty with yourself. And this is not arguing over a verbal oath of the first century. This is about dealing with our identity and our level of integrity in honest and real ways and how we relate to each other. This is about dealing with not exploiting other people or relationships to make yourself look better than how you see yourself. And Yeshua is highlighting how we use words to spin different versions of ourselves in order to portray something that simply isn't true or isn't us.

Have you ever been in a social situation where you want to impress someone else? Never, right? Of course we all do. It's human nature, right? We always want to give a good impression of who we are. Have you ever name-dropped in order to impress people around you? Yeah, I know so-and-so. Yeah, so-and-so and I, we hang out a lot, right? Right?

Using Words to Spin Different Versions of Ourselves

This is a perfect example of what Yeshua is expressing that I feel we can relate to today. So, hey guys, let's just say we're hanging out and talking and I don't know you very well. I want you to think of me as really kind of cool and popular. So have you guys heard of David Wilber? Yeah, that teaching pastor who does those awesome debates online and is real famous and has blogs and videos. Yeah, he lives five minutes away from me. Yeah, and we're biffles. B-F-effles. Yeah, we're tight, right? Is David a great guy? Yeah, he's awesome. Sometimes we use other people in order to exaggerate our own reputation.

Has anyone ever been guilty of that? Even on a subconscious level, we do it subconsciously. This is how bad it is. You guys thought I was going to keep talking about oaths and stuff in the ancient Near East and how they used to do oaths and blood. No, this is very real. We do this all the time and we don't even realize we do it.

And most of the time when we do it, we might really want to talk about how awesome our friends are or how amazing they are as image bearers of God. But sometimes we don't. Sometimes we name drop with intention. And it isn't to portray other people as fully talented, amazing people. It's to puff up our own identity.

Protecting Our Reputation

Has anyone ever been in a situation like that at work? Maybe in sales. I used to work at Best Buy a long time ago. And let's say you're supposed to sell computers. I was in computer sales, and so I would sell computers and I was pretty knowledgeable about computers. But they also wanted us to sell media and accessories. Push those sales. Was it the dang protection plan? Dust, heat, humidity—protects against all that for \$300. My computer's \$2.99 on sale. Do you want it to last? I mean, just the whole thing, right?

And so has anyone ever been at work where a customer asks you a question on something that you want to appear expert on, and you have no clue about the standards, specifications, or what they're asking, right? So you tell them you're being completely honest, and you say, Yeah, I'm not really sure. Let me go find someone else that might be able to answer that question for you—because that's exactly what we try to do when we're wanting to portray ourselves as experts. No, you spend five minutes explaining absolutely nothing and urging them to buy whatever it is that you're trying to sell them anyway. You're a salesman. Anybody? Is that just me trying to put on a song and dance to sell something? It's what we do as part of the human condition.

And the issue isn't about trying to push a sale. The issue is not acknowledging. The issue is not being willing to be honest with your reputation and who you are and not being the guy who knows about UPS surge protectors and battery backups and why this one costs \$200 and this one's on sale for \$39 and they look exactly the same. The unwillingness to be that guy who can't tell the difference is what Yeshua is approaching here in the deepest core of what he's saying. You're hiding, and you're willing to do whatever it is, take advantage of everyone else to protect that because you're scared.

When the Bible Goes to Our Heads Instead of Our Hearts

When we began studying the Word of God, it's amazing—the incredible things that happen to us as adults as a result of digging into Scripture. How many of you guys, in the last couple years of digging in the Scriptures and taking time to read God's Word, have just been amazed and blessed by what God has shown you? It's amazing.

Whoa, we read the Sabbath, and the Sabbath is actually on a day of the week, and it represents recognizing God's sovereignty over creation. That's amazing! It's one day. It's like President's Day on steroids. We stop what we're doing and what we create, and we look to him in awe at how he is managing his universe and his creation. This is amazing.

Or whoa, Jesus' name was really what we would say Joshua, and it's pronounced Yeshua. Whoa, right? This is a big deal, right?

Or the Bible says seven pairs of clean animals went on that boat, and only two of unclean animals went on that boat. And this is pretty neat stuff, right? We can't wait to go out and tell everybody about how many clean animals went on the ark. I don't know. That was something I did. I was so excited about that. It's really cool to see some things in the Bible that we never saw before, but sometimes we let the Bible go to our heads instead of our hearts.

It Destroys Relationships

And the result is the person who wants to be known for having all the Bible answers and is never wrong. It destroys relationships because when our reputation is threatened, we tend to lash out to protect it because we're scared of being the guy who doesn't know all the details of the sacrifices or the blood manipulation details in Leviticus or whatever.

It destroys relationships when we puff up our chests and want to fight and cut down others, or conflate some off-the-wall biblical theory not to discuss God's Word but to protect our own reputation in the eyes of others. And this is not just about putting your hand in a Bible and swearing in the name of God in the first century. This is a very real issue that we struggle with. And maybe this happens to you and you don't even realize it. As I said, it's subconscious. That's the conditioning of this world. And Yeshua's calling it out. He's calling us out on it.

The Spiritual Language We Use to Hide

And we need to learn to come to a place where we're no longer manipulating others so that they can see us in a certain light. Yeshua's issue here is be honest and have integrity. And if there's a part of you that needs to change, let's work on it together as a fellowship. Don't think that you are the only one having struggles or that you're not perfect in your life, so you try to hide, because that's the issue that Yeshua is impressing here.

And look—Yeshua is calling out the Pharisees for using spirituality and religious terms in this song and dance. This is something I think, as believers, we do a lot, and we don't even realize it.

And sometimes we are completely sincere when it happens. But let me ask you guys if this has ever happened to you or if you've done this yourself. When, let's say, someone has an idea or a decision to make, or something is happening, and they go to offer a solution to a problem you're having, and that solution goes something like this. You ready? Okay.

I've really been praying about this issue that we're having, and God has laid it on my heart that XYZ is a solution. Or God is really leading me to do this thing that I will ultimately benefit from. Or how about I'm waiting on the Lord to answer me on that volunteer opportunity in the fellowship. When you ask for volunteers, kids class, I'm just not led in that direction at the moment. The Holy Spirit isn't leading me. Hey, can you help out this week with setting up or tearing down? I'm going to have to pray about that one. What's to pray about?

Let Your Yes Be Yes

When there's a need in a fellowship, we're doing some upgrades and we need funding, I don't know, for sound equipment or something. Would you like to help pay for that? I'm going to pray about that. You're going to pray about it? What is there to pray about? Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Be honest, right?

And many times, if we've ever done this, it's most likely because we really have been praying, and we really have been seeking the advice of our peers and our elders, and this is something that's been on our heart, and we truly felt God's presence lead us in a direction.

But then there are other times when it isn't. And we do these things when we use God's name to back our own intentions, our own wants, or our own agendas, just like the Pharisees did. We do it because we don't want feedback on a lifestyle change that we're having, we don't want feedback on a decision that we're making, or we don't want anyone's opinions, and we don't even want a response. So we say our decision has come by way of God's eternal decree in our lives. And it's like I can't even respond to that. Well, that's good. I mean, I'm not going to—I can't argue with God.

Putting Up a Wall Instead of Having a Dialogue

And when you exploit God's name in this manner, it's a way of putting up a wall instead of having a dialogue. And it's something that we see done a lot. Most of the time, it's because we have been praying and God is leading us. But sometimes it's not. And Yeshua's calling that out right here. No, you're swearing on, you're exploiting God's reputation for your own gain. And the issue with what we're doing is we're exploiting God to appear more spiritual, or whatever, in our fellowship community. And that is an issue for a community.

You're using Yeshua to manipulate how people see you or respond to your decisions in your life. And you see leadership do it all the time when leadership has a certain direction or a certain project they want to push. I mean, I know I'm a peer target. I know God's really leading us to do

this. How do you argue with that? Maybe he is. But we as people of God have to be careful that we do not exploit God's reputation for our own selfish agendas.

Using Yeshua to put a kosher stamp or make a varying situation into an absolute is not only unwise, it's irresponsible.

Control or Honest Relationship

So yeah, it's a lot easier to attempt to control people than to have an honest relationship built on love with them and to be honest with them about how you feel, if you disagree with something, or if you want to pursue an opportunity.

Some of us struggle with lust, some of us struggle with anger, some of us struggle with hurting marriages. This is a topic that hits home in one aspect or another for just about everyone, and you can't deny it. Our need to compensate for our insecurities and our fear can lead us to take advantage of others, exploit relationships, and use our vocabulary to do a song and dance so we can keep hiding from everyone else. And we want to hide. We want to do this because we're scared.

For whatever reason, we're scared of something. Because if everyone knew what I was really like or the opinions that I really had, if everyone knew even the things that I struggle with in my own life, the things that keep me from being perfect, if everyone knew that, maybe they wouldn't like me anymore. They wouldn't want to be friends with me anymore. They would judge me. They would be my judge, and I don't want that. And so I want to continue doing the song and dance. I want to continue being and presenting a person that I am not.

And this is tragic. This is tragic.

A Community Built on Love, Trust, Mercy, and Understanding

Because as believers, we are commanded to be a community built on love, trust, mercy, and understanding—a community that helps. But we find ourselves in the community. Smiles on, everything is fantastic, but the reality is we're hiding. And the issue comes in when every single person in that community does it. And this community centered around Yeshua isn't a community at all. It's a big pony show, and it is what it is.

And you may not be doing it under the guise of swearing by God's name in His holy temple, by the hair on my head. It may be a personality change around certain people. It may be

embellishing experiences and stories, which I know none of us have ever done. It may be trying to gain popularity at other people's expense. They all revolve around the same core issue here.

Let Your Yes Be Yes and Your No Be No

And Yeshua says, Yeshua says, let your yes be yes and your no be no. And anything more than this, anything exaggerated, anything that twists your yes and your no is birthed from evil—the evil intent to get one's way through verbal manipulation of the thoughts and choices of other people.

And when we say birthed from evil, sometimes we think of the Wicked Witch from the Wizard of Oz or something. I don't see you as that. I don't see me as that—as this person that's out to just get people. It's an evil influence at its core, and this is how it manifests. And it has taken humanity over as its victim. We are victims when we succumb to this, and we have the power to overcome it.

And Yeshua is saying, you don't have to be a victim anymore. A new kingdom has come. A new citizenship has come. A new king has been instituted. You don't have to be a victim of this anymore.

And so if I could have the worship team, we could go ahead and conclude.

An Audit of How You Present Yourself

I don't know where you find yourself today. Maybe you're auditing yourself right now on how you treat others and how you treat relationships in your life, how you walk around, or how you present yourself on social media. I'm sure nobody, nobody wants to embellish their lifestyle a little bit in order to gain something they don't currently have on social media.

Maybe you're sitting here pegged by the words of this rabbi who walked around Galilee preaching. Maybe he got you, knowing you can't continue hiding, knowing you can't continue being scared. Scripture tells us that perfect love casts out all fear. And this love is demonstrated through Yeshua.

Our need for fellowship, our need for community, our need to be a family is greater than our fear. [1 John 3](#), 14, he states, we know that we have passed from death to life because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. One another, loving one another, being a receptacle for love to other people. This is how we live in the spirit and the life that Yeshua invites us to live in.

Death Walking Around

And when we continue hiding, when we continue doing a song and dance, when we continue to be sheltered in our fear and our lack of love and our respect for others, John says we are death walking around. And Yeshua came to display not a judgment against us. He came to provide a way and a standard that gives us life. And this life is based on his acceptance, his forgiveness, and his mercy despite the broken, lying, song and dance kind of people that we find ourselves being.

His message is simple. Follow me. Follow me as I collide with the standards of this world. Follow me in showing a level of honesty and not having to back it with other people and other reputations as collateral.

The world is a shattered place because of the very things we have done and abused and exploited. He's calling us to live in him, to live above these things. And maybe sheltering yourself in your own identity with its failures and pitfalls is something you feel you can never let go of.

If that's you today, I would say something like this. I would say that you've been purchased. You are not your own anymore. And your identity doesn't have to be perfect because Yeshua's identity is. And I would tell that person that starting today, you can start a new identity in this Messiah, in this King. And you have a community of believers right here around you. And we support each other. And we pray for each other. And we don't give up on each other. And we want to know you without the song and dance.

Because if you really believe and understand who Yeshua is and what Yeshua has done, who cares what people think of you? Your life and who you are is not determined by what other people think about you. It's determined by what Yeshua has already done.

A New Identity in This Messiah

So swearing by a name of something, or lying, or embellishing is just the top layer of a deeper core issue here. Don't let fear own you. We are not perfect and we all need help with something. So I want you to leave here knowing that that's okay. You don't have to do the song and dance anymore.

So please stand as we conclude services with worship. We have a prayer team. The prayer team will be off to the sides here. Maybe you want to make a choice today to no longer live in fear, to no longer determine your identity based on your own past, your own flaws. Maybe you're here

today and need support in some other area of your life. We have a prayer team here, and we would love to pray with you during this time of worship.

Thank you. Shalom. I'm Matthew Vandrells, and I hope you enjoyed this message.

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