

from your lips. **Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.**” (Colossians 3:5-9 NIV)

“But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers **and liars** and perjurers, **and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,**” (1 Tim. 1:8-10 NASB)

These verses identify those who lie with some pretty awful sinners of other kinds. Apparently God expects Christians to be people of their word even though it is not called a “covenant.” When we, as Christians give our word to another, we’re promising the other party that we’re committed to keeping the terms of that agreement or statement, no matter what. For the Christian, that should be as binding as making a covenant was in the Old Testament.

Except in the case of marriage and for legal terminology, we no longer make covenants. Once the New Covenant was “cut” by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, there are no other references at all to Christians making covenants in the New Testament. There are in fact, a few verses in the New Testament that clearly tell us that as Christians, *our word alone* should be sufficient and we should not *have* to swear an oath (or make a covenant) for it to be binding.

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ But I tell you, do not swear at all:...Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No;’ anything beyond this comes from the evil one. (Matt. 5:33 34 and 37 NIV)

As with making a covenant, swearing an oath is an appeal to God to be a witness to its making. These verses certainly do not forbid an oath of marriage or taking an oath for legal purposes. They simply mean that as Christians, we *cannot* take oaths lightly. God is a witness. And the solemn words of a Christian should be as sacred as an oath. A simple “yes” or “no” should be enough to bind the word of a Christian. After all, God (through the indwelling Holy Spirit) is *always* present with Christians. So for the Christian, isn’t He *always* a witness anyway?

Again, the *word alone* of a Christian should be as binding as making a covenant. *That’s* why we do not have to make covenants today (Matt 5:34). You see, if we are truly striving to do the will of God there is really no difference between making a covenant and giving our word. A covenant is a covenant is a covenant

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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Covenants Today

By today’s standards, the broadest view of the Bible would probably be that it is a very old book that has numerous moral principles to use in this life. A more narrow view would be that the Bible is by its own declaration, the Word of God passed through various writers, instructing mankind how to live. The most narrow view, again by today’s standards, is that the Bible is in fact the Word of God and it tells us three things vital for mankind. First — where we came from; second — where we are; and third — where we are going. This last position adds an additional twist. It provides mankind with the ability to determine our own eternal destination by accepting the teachings of the New Testament concerning Salvation.

You might, by now be saying, “So what’s the point?” Well, consider this for a moment. Since God went to great lengths to establish a covenant with mankind on which we must rely to gain Salvation, there is surely a lesson for us to learn concerning covenants and the making of them.

We readily accept that the Bible is filled with examples that we are to follow but for the most part covenant making, keeping and breaking, is relatively unexplored territory for many of us. Perhaps the clearest modern day example that comes to mind concerning making of a covenant is that of marriage (Malachi 2:13-16 and Prov. 2:17). Covenants are also made in the case of legal documents. The definition associated with the word “covenant” in legal terminology is:

“A written document in which signatories either commit themselves to do (or not to do) a certain thing or in which they agree on a certain set of facts.”

While many of us may from time to time sign binding contracts or covenants for legal purposes, in our day to day living we simply make agreements or promises. Regardless of the extent of binding authority that a contract or a covenant might have on a Christian, the fact remains that as Christians, we should be good for our word, no matter what. As Christians, our word is our word is our word — no matter what. Christians should always “commit themselves to do (or not to do) a certain thing” by nothing more than their word. Anything less than keeping our word is lying and the Bible has very harsh words for those who lie.

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and **all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone:** which is the second death.” (Rev. 21:8 KJV)

Unfortunately however, in today's culture, the expectation is that most agreements need not be kept and honesty is optional — something to be used *only* when the lack of it is not needed to advance one's cause. Christians however, are held to a higher standard not only by the very Word of God but also by those who are not Christians. Even though our religious beliefs are often criticized and Christians are the brunt of many jokes, we are *expected* to be honest. When Christians are *not* honest, comments such as "...and they call themselves Christians" are muttered by those who are victims of the lies of those who profess to be Christians. Perhaps the greatest tragedy however, is that many who profess to be Christians, no longer consider it lying when they break their word or break contracts, agreements, or promises. Some even think it is acceptable to "shade the truth" to accomplish selfish goals, gain favor with others or perhaps, grow bigger churches.

Christians today, are faced with numerous challenges because of the direction of our culture. Growing numbers of Biblical topics are being restated by those who are willing to "shade the Truth" and refer to those topics as opinion rather than Biblical Truth. The New Covenant was given to us by God through the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it *is* just that — a covenant — and a covenant can not be broken or changed to satisfy the need of the moment. Remember Joshua? More and more frequently, even those who profess to be Christians view the Divinely revealed New Covenant as something that is subject to being broken by changing it to suit their own needs. It is simply not taken as seriously as it must be taken. A covenant is a covenant is a covenant — no matter what! If Christians today do not see the necessity of keeping the Divine Covenant just as it was revealed to us, most assuredly they will have no problem with failing to keep their own word.

God certainly did not allow Joshua the option of breaking the covenant he had made with a nonchalant "they'll get over it" attitude. An attitude such as that, when displayed by Christians and non-Christians alike will likely have numerous unfavorable results. For example, we mentioned earlier in this article that marriage is perhaps the clearest current day paradigm of making a covenant. From the beginning, it was God's intention that one man be bound to one woman in the covenant of marriage for life. But as we track the history of mankind, we learn that there have been *many* ways that mankind has chosen to take paths different from what God intended. Marriage is just one of those different paths. Over the past several years, the solemnity of that covenant of marriage has become less and less binding. This one lone deviation from God's path has resulted in *numerous* issues or problems that would not even exist if it were not for mankind's willingness to take lightly the making of that covenant. This one failure alone to recognize that a covenant is a covenant is a covenant — no matter what, results in such things as broken families, multiple marriage partners, step children, single parent households, attorney fees, court costs, counselors, alimony, adulterous relationships and on and on — and all of this *because* of breaking

one covenant relationship. The ripple effect of breaking just *one* covenant relationship is almost mind-boggling!

Now, we may not think of giving our word to someone as being a covenant, but perhaps we should give it more importance than we do. Covenants were certainly important to God. He gave us one to rely on for our salvation. Can we really believe that God's example of making (or cutting) covenants with His people was something He — and only He, would be bound to forever. By the Old Testament examples of "cutting" covenants we can surely see that God intends for us to keep our word, whether it's a covenant or a promise or an agreement. God's unwavering example in demanding that covenants be kept is an example we must emulate.

The impact of the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20) that God made with us concerning our salvation, is that we can look optimistically toward a future with Him for all of eternity. We're able to do that because we know beyond any doubt that God will not break that covenant. If we thought that God took that covenant as lightly as many take the covenant of marriage today, there would be no assurance of our salvation. But we know that with God, a covenant is a covenant is a covenant — no matter what. As Christians, shouldn't our agreements, promises and word be just as dependable today?

What impact would we have on society if every Christian raised the level of their word to the level God expected when a covenant was made during Old Testament times? As instruments of God who are commanded to spread the Gospel, our ability to do so could only be improved when we are known by our honesty and reliability in our dealings with others on this earth. Once again, remember that Joshua was required to keep his covenant even though the Gibeonites had deceived him to get him to make the covenant with them. Because of that covenant, the Gibeonites became thorns in the side of the Israelites throughout the rest of Israel's history, but Joshua kept his word. It was a covenant! Should we be people whose word is our bond, or are we free to stretch, "shade" or break agreements and promises when it is more profitable or convenient to the situation? Isn't that the same as lying?

We've already read in Revelations 21:8 that those who lie are in the company of murderers, whoremongers and sorcerers. John 8:44 refers to the Devil as "*the father of lies.*" That same verse tells us that Satan "*is a liar*" and that when he lies he is speaking his "*native language*" (NIV). Let's also look at a couple of other verses where the Bible speaks of lying.

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language