

Immerse Day 63 :: Promises, Promises

We had a rule in our house. If you promise something, you do it. No matter what. Now, life happens, and things come up. Which means you are very careful with your promises. If you say you'll do something but then there's an emergency so you can't, life happens. But if you've promised, no emergency keeps you away. We reserved "I promise" for life moments.

In the OT, rather than, "I promise," they made vows. And the vows were stronger based on the strength of the thing you vowed upon. "I vow by the toy in my happy meal," wasn't much of a vow. "I vow by the house in which I live," was much stronger. "I vow by the temple," was powerful stuff, and "I vow by God Himself," was ironclad. These vows could not be broken without consequence.

This was not a religious formality but a Biblical Law. On par with the other commands of God, keeping such oaths, vows made to God or by God, was mandatory. But people will, in a moment of passion or pressure, made dumb mistakes, and this includes dumb vows. "Oh, honey I love you and I vow by God I'll marry you!" Easy to say in a moment of passion, hard to follow through with when your father was supposed to set up your marriage.

So there was a whole system, a ranking, of vows by the time of Jesus, leading Him to command, "Let your yes be 'yes' and your no be 'no'. Anything more is of the devil." Don't try to give yourself weasel-room out of a promise because you only vowed on a footstool rather than on your own life. When you promise, make it so. As we used to say, "my word is my bond."

Today, we could use a little more of this vow-keeping. We could use more truth telling and promise-keeping in both the political realm and our daily lives. We inherently don't trust politicians because they so seldom keep their promises. In fact, it is cause for celebration in the political world when a politician actually keeps his or her campaign promises (so sad). Advertisers have to have an entire book of rules about how to bend the truth correctly. And in the church? How many in our society trust clergy anymore?

What if we as Christians became known for our truth-telling? What if we never, NEVER lied? Not at work, at school, at church, at home, in our families, with our neighbors... what if everyone who talked about Christians noticed that they always, ALWAYS told the truth, and did so in love? What a witness that would be.