

United Church of God, *an International Association*



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Swearing

Doctrinal Statement

Approved by the Council of Elders
May 22, 2008

All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

SWEARING

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The practice of swearing that one's word is truthful, or taking an oath to that effect, is an entrenched part of our society's legal functioning. At its core, however, it puts a person in the position of doing something that the Scriptures show us only God can rightly do.

Jesus Christ Himself gave this instruction: "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:34-37).

As Christians, our answers should always be truthful, not just when we take an oath or swear that what we say is the truth. If some of our statements include an oath while others don't, what does that imply about those that don't? Are they less credible? Christ showed that a simple yes or no response should be sufficient. He commands us to avoid swearing of any kind.

Christ's own teaching, cited above, shows that we are to do our best to tell the truth as we understand it. Only God has infallible judgment, and has the right to take an oath or swear if He so chooses (Hebrews 6:13-17; Psalm 110:4; Luke 1:73). This simple and straightforward approach that Christ commands His disciples to follow is not incompatible with affirming to tell the truth. The laws of many countries, including the United States, will generally permit affirming to tell the truth without requiring an individual to swear, place his or her hand on a Bible or raise the right hand. Naturally, in a legal setting, if a person knows he or she will be "sworn in" for some proceeding, it would be wise to advise one's legal counsel and/or the clerk of the court ahead of time regarding this personal conviction against swearing, so as to avoid creating a scene or an undue disruption in the proceeding, which could foment unnecessary antagonism.

If an individual is convicted that it would be improper to swear by an oath, but is being called upon to do so, he or she can contact the General Counsel for the Church to receive assistance in the proper way to raise personal objections in a formal legal setting, including applicable statutes and case law citations that can be referred to in support of that conviction.