

A World of Broken Promises - the Importance of Keeping Your Word

By Paul J. Meyer

Did you know that discrimination lawsuits in the workplace have increased by 2,200 percent since 1980? Whatever happened to the motto: "My word is my bond"? In fact, even to this day, I still "sign" a lot of my business deals with a handshake, a practice that occasionally keeps my lawyer up nights.

I was always taught, "You should say what you mean and mean what you say." It has simply never occurred to me to break my promise to someone or to try and slither out of a deal because some finite point wasn't in writing. My own integrity and credibility are on the line when I make a verbal commitment to someone just as much as when I sign a legal document.

"Trust [is] the foundation on which our relationships are built. Promise-keeping is the adhesive, the substance of our character that prevents the foundation of trust from cracking."

You can certainly tell people trust less these days by the size of legal contracts and by the vast number of lawyers needed to process the unending line of lawsuits. It's appalling to note the greed, dishonesty, and abusive situations that have become the norm in people's personal and business lives.

Why keep your word?

Keeping your promises to people indicates you are dependable, accountable, reliable, and credible. That's certainly the kind of person I want to be and it surely is the type of individual I want to do business with or enjoy as a friend.

No one wants to be in a personal relationship with someone they can't trust or do business with someone who fails to deliver at a crucial time. Everything I do in life requires the cooperation and assistance of other people, so if I break my promises or they break theirs, neither of us is going to reach our goals.

I also know I have been protected, honored, and greatly blessed by God as a result of keeping my word.

My word is my bond.

I had an employee who shared with me that even though there was nothing physically wrong with him, he still had the feeling he didn't have much longer to live. He asked if I would make sure his wife was cared for should something happen to him. I gave him my word I would do that. I suggested that my company take out a life insurance policy on him but make his wife the beneficiary. Strangely enough just 90 days later he died from a brain aneurysm!

Not only did my company honor his wife as the beneficiary, but I also continued to pay her half of her husband's salary for the next 17 years until she qualified for social security funds. I also made arrangements for someone to help manage her money so she could continue with her same lifestyle.

Why did I do this even though I was not legally bound? Because I had given this man my word to take care of his wife and my word is my bond!

The value of keeping your promises

Businessman and president of Faith Work Ministries, Bill Nix defines trust as "the foundation on which our relationships are built. Promise-keeping is the adhesive, the substance of our character that prevents the foundation of trust from cracking."

Saying you forgot a promise you made is not an acceptable excuse. Either avoid making the promise in the first place or write it down and keep it in a place of safekeeping. I've found that people generally do not break just one promise. It becomes a habit.

If someone makes a promise to me I usually make a note of it and then check back if I don't see any follow through. If in the end they don't keep their promise I erase it from my mind. I decided a long time away not to poison my own system by holding a grudge. I simply move on and find a person I *can* trust.

"Yes" should mean "yes" and "No" should mean "no."

Betrayal has become the normal experience in far too many people's lives. A disregard for keeping your word has been elevated to the new art form! It seems the more scandalous a person becomes the more popular and admired they are. What a sad commentary on our world today!

On the other hand, can you imagine how wonderful life would be if people merely said "yes" when they meant "yes" and "no" when they meant "no"? When someone said, "You can count on me," they would mean exactly that.

Isn't it time the pendulum swung back toward credibility, trust, and honor? Isn't it time "My Word Is My Bond" becomes the "law" of the land once more?

Paul J. Meyer, best-selling *New York Times* author and founder of the Success Motivation Institute has written two dozen full-length programs plus numerous books on attitude, motivation, goal setting, management, leadership, and time management. In his highly acclaimed book, *24 Keys That Bring Complete Success*, available at www.pauljmeyer.com, Paul shares the 24 keys that have made him the success he is today.

