

Dear Rosa,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You told us that you were homeless and forced to live on welfare in a shelter with your son. You said you were in a position where you had to sign documents for which you had to swear that you were telling the truth. You wanted to know if you should try to get out of the welfare system by finding a cashiers' job and hope for the best, since the Scriptures tell us not to swear.

We believe you are referring to Matthew 5:33-37. "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: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

We believe that these scriptures refer to the ordinary conversations an individual has in his personal life. The act of commonly swearing on the Lord's name or on the Bible has the tendency to make a person less reverent to the Lord and more likely to break his oaths. These scriptures tell us that where the word is held sacred the avenues of possible sin, error and falsehood are measurably stopped.

However, we believe that nothing in the above scriptures can properly be understood to apply to the taking of an oath in a court of law or signing documents for the government swearing that you are telling the truth. The fact that one swears what he says is true implies that he does not expect his hearer to believe his simple word, and this, in turn, presupposes that his word is not ordinarily worthy of belief. Such "swearings" are, therefore, necessary because not everyone in the world has the high standard of truth that we Christians have and is desired by God.

Should you get out of the welfare system solely because you must swear that you are telling the truth? No, that is not the reason to leave the welfare system. We do hope that you will be able to find a job that will sustain both you and your son so that you can eventually make your own way and no longer need government assistance. We commend you for your high sense of character, respect for the God's word and for taking responsibility for your actions. We wish you well in the future. "Blessed is the man that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters." (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio