

What does speaking honourably have to do with recovery? So what if I swear? Everybody else tells off-colour jokes. To live in recovery is to live as respectful people, honouring God and those God loves. How does my speech reflect this?

Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. (Ex. 20:7, Matt. 6:9 NLT)

God's name upholds His reputation and demonstrates His character in all that He says and does. Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer we are committing ourselves to upholding God's name with reverence and using it with respect. In the same way that we would not appreciate people saying or doing things in our name, which we personally don't approve of, so we shouldn't use God's name to try and accomplish things He would not approve of. The most common way people misuse God's name is by swearing it in response to something that angers or irritates us, or, when something unexpected happens that startles us. Many of us would rather not swear but we get careless and it's out of our mouth before we even think about it. In present day society we hear so much profanity in music, in movies, on the street, and in print that it almost seems the normal way to talk.

A great deal of swearing includes references to bodily functions or ugly labels of body parts. All of these are used as a slur and are intended to bring filth and negativity on a person. Movie producers have often rationalized the presence of profanity in movies as being a more realistic expression of what people say or do in the scenes they are portraying. Their observation of human interaction may be accurate but God's commandment is that we abstain from such talk. ***Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.*** (Ephesians 5:4 NLT)

We also need to ask ourselves if we honour God with the content of our speech. Stories and jokes may celebrate and honour a person or they may speak against and demean a person's race, or their ethnic background. Traditional roles such as that of a mother-in-law have been the focus of many jokes that demean a beautiful relationship that God has established in families. The source of many stories in the comedy routine of a stand-up comic have sexual undertones and are demeaning to females or males, or treat God's gift of sexual intercourse for marriage partners casually and with dishonour. ***But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.*** (Colossians 3:8 NLT)

Moments of anger, disappointment, and frustration are filled with temptation to speak dishonourably. People act unfairly or carelessly in ways that harm others. It is so easy to think and speak in ways that dishonour and curse a person in reaction to what they have said or done. This is not God's way of speaking when dealing with problems. ***And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!*** (James 3:10 NLT)

One of the best ways to help ourselves get out of the habit of voluntary or involuntary swearing and filthy talk is to keep

ourselves away from situations, as much as possible, where cursing and swearing are the norm. While we may have to tolerate swearing in work environments, there are many other situations where we can make decisions about what we input into our brains. There's music with off-colour language that we can remove from our mp3 player. TV shows, DVD's, and movies have warnings around coarse language which we can use to help us decide about viewing or not viewing them. There are friends and associates whom we can either gently ask not to swear around us or we can limit the time we spend in their company. God takes swearing and filthy talk seriously. Do we? What are we willing to do to help tame our tongue and help us speak with purity and respect? ***Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*** (Ephesians 4:29 NLT)

We claim to be Christians with our mouths. God's word challenges us to think about other words that come from our mouths and only claim to be a Christian when the way we live matches who we say we are. ***Those who claim they belong to the Lord must turn away from all wickedness.*** (2 Timothy 2:19 NLT) This should give us reason to pause when we are about to open our mouths or fill our minds with cursing and obscene talk. We are not being "pruders" when we do this. We are acting as people of God. Are we out of step with our culture? Absolutely! Just as Jesus did, we are called to challenge people to a higher standard by the way we live. Do we?

When it came to promises and commitments, Jesus put high value on simple, clear, and responsible talk. In His day the only way some people would keep certain commitments was to swear by this or that. This practice of not being people of their word offended Jesus' sense of justice, particularly when people were using the name of God or the temple or some other religious item as the object of their sworn statement. ***Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Your word is enough. To strengthen your promise with a vow shows that something is wrong.*** (Matthew 5:37 NLT) Are we people of our word or do we need a court order to force us to tell the truth or fulfill the commitments we make?

One of the other ways Jesus challenged his disciples about their dishonouring of God's name was in thoughtless singing, and prayer. Do we worship God with our singing or do we sing songs just because we like the tune or the beat? Are we really confessing our sins when we pray a prayer of confession in church? When we pray, "In Jesus name" are we asking for things we know are what He would ask for? ***When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again.*** (Matthew 6:7 NLT) Do we mean what we say and say what we mean?

Are we honouring God with our use of His name in our words and in our lives? Are we honouring one another in our conversations, our commitments, and even in our disappointments? ***Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.*** (1 Timothy 4:12 NLT)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How are we honouring or misusing God's name?
2. How can we grow in grace, and also encourage others to honour God and those around us in everything we say and do?