

Ten Commandments -- #3 Honouring God's Name

3	Do not use the name of God irreverently, nor use it to swear to a falsehood.	Always use God's name reverently.
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Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. (Exodus 20:7 NLT)

Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. (Matthew 6:9 NLT)

God's name is his reputation and it stands for His character. Every time we pray the Lord's prayer we are committing ourselves to holding God's name with reverence and using it with respect. In the same way that we don't appreciate people saying or doing things in our name that we don't approve of, so we shouldn't use God's name to try to accomplish things He wouldn't approve of.

The most common way we misuse God's name is swearing in response to something that angers or irritates us or 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 think of it. In our present day society we hear so much profanity in music, movies, on the street, in print that it almost seems the normal way to talk. 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 situations that are being 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)

One of the best ways to help ourselves get out of the habit of voluntary or involuntary swearing is to keep ourselves away from situations, as much as possible, where cursing and swearing are the norm. While there may be work, or even ministry environments where swearing happens around us, there are many other situations where we can make choices about what we input into our brains. There's music and videos and movies with elevated ratings that we can make choices about seeing or not seeing. There are friends and associates we can either gently ask to not swear around us or limit our time with them. God takes swearing seriously. Do we? What are we willing to do to help tame our tongue and help us speak with purity and respect?

Many people call themselves Christian simply because they were born in Canada, a traditionally Christian nation. God's words challenges us to think about our actions and only claim to be a Christian when the way we live matches who we say we are. We cannot say we are followers of Jesus and intentionally do things that go against what He taught.

Those who claim they belong to the Lord must turn away from all wickedness. (2 Timothy 2:19 NLT) This should give us pause when we are considering a relapse into our addictive behaviours or challenging God's will with doing something we know violates Biblical teaching.

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)

In our day we misuse God's name when we have to strengthen what we need to say with, "God told me to tell you" "God led me ... " "God told me ... " While God does lovingly communicate all sorts of things to us through the Bible, through others, and through the Holy Spirit, Jesus taught that we should take responsibility for what we are saying and be simple people of "yes" and "no", trusting that as we do our best to follow God's leading He will confirm us when we are right and help us understand when we stray off base. At those times when we do believe we have a specific word from the Lord we need to be cautious and respectful of the word and bring it with humility in a way that suggests, "It seems to me that God is saying ...",

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)

One of the other ways Jesus challenged his disciples about their misuse of God's name was in meaningless and thoughtless singing, prayer, or conversation. 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?

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?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How are we misusing God's name?
2. What can we do to honour God and His name in what we do and say?