

**General Topics :: What is taking Gods name in vain?****What is taking Gods name in vain? - posted by MaryJane, on: 2011/6/12 17:05**

I have been surprised by the number of young people in particular who profess to follow Jesus and yet take His name in vain by using other words instead of actually saying God. This is done as well with swear words and when I asked about this I was told that I am making a big deal out of nothing that at least these young ones are using substitute words and not actually saying "the words?" I wonder anyone here have any thoughts on this, do you consider using substitute words for swear words, or words to use instead of God as still taking His name in vain or am I being overly sensitive?

What is the standard in this? I had one young man tell me that he believes any word can be a swear word that it all depends on the attitude of the heart and that just because society made certain words bad does not mean that they actually are. This topic seems to come up often with young people

God Bless  
mj

**Re: What is taking Gods name in vain? - posted by White\_Stone (), on: 2011/6/12 17:56**

Hello MaryJane,

My take is God judges the 'heart.' In my understanding, if that is what you meant, you can not fool God.

Why would anyone want to take a chance of offending the Creator of the entire Universe, the Father of our Lord Jesus?

Those phrases, like Golly, Dang Gosh, Jeesh are all substitutes for God and curse words. We are supposed to avoid worldly things, that is what slang is - worldly.

Quote:  
-----I had one young man tell me that he believes any word can be a swear word that it all depends on the attitude of the heart and that just because society made certain words bad does not mean that they actually are.  
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He is partially right, but when society 'makes' certain words 'bad' then whoever hears them will hear 'bad' words.

This is an excellent subject to discuss with young people. They need to be cautioned, as young people are trying so hard to grow up that they misunderstand rebellion for maturity.

regards,  
white stone

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2011/6/12 20:10**

For what it's worth: here is another take on this theme:

Taking the Lord's Name in Vain  
By Diane Eaton 2001

Most of us learned the third commandment when we were very young. It says,

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."  
Ex. 20:7

I always assumed that this meant: Don't cuss using God's name. I will never forget when I was in grade three and one

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little boy broke that rule. There were dire consequences for him. For some time after that all the school yard conversation seemed to be absorbed in discussion about that incident. We all got the message: Those who didn't want to get in trouble didn't dare get caught using bad language (with God's name) and those who wanted attention used God's name profanely to get a rise out of everyone.

Conscientious people are offended when they hear the Lord's name used in a profane way, and rightly so. Those who were raised respectfully learned not to speak God's name wrongly. Instead they might express strong emotion by using toned-down expletives 'Gee!', 'Gosh!' or 'Golly!' or 'Gee whiz!' But for some (like my religious authorities at the time) even those words were considered to be 'unwholesome talk'

So what do you say when your thumb gets bashed by the hammer? Do you shout out, "Praise the Lord anyway!"? Is this more pious than saying, "For Christ's sake!" After all, we are supposed to praise him all the times. But we should do all for his sake, too. What about saying "For Pete's sake!" Is that not taking Pete's name in vain? (Oh, but Peter was only an apostle!)

Strong's Concordance clarifies the meaning of "vain" by giving some other meanings: deceptive, falsely, lying, idolatry, uselessness

I don't think that the NIV gets these meanings across clearly enough. It simply says: "You shall not misuse the name..."

I will attempt to describe my thoughts on the meaning of this commandment:

Taking a name - the implications:

What does it mean when we take on someone's name? The marriage tradition gives us a good analogy. A woman can't take the name of any man just because she likes him or his house, or because he is good looking and has lots of money. She marries a man only after he has invited her to be his wife. Through a promise, he receives her into a permanent covenant relationship with him. She promises to remain faithful. She surrenders her own surname and takes the name of her husband. She becomes the Mistress (Mrs.) of \_\_\_ (his name) and receives all the rights and privileges associated with that relationship.

In many cultures marriage has been a form of social security. The woman had a secure place to live and be provided for. Her responsibility was to raise children under her husband's name. In turn, the husband promised to protect and provide for her. She and the children were safe. As long as she remained faithful, she was also safe from other men taking advantage of her. Taking the name of her husband had a lot of implications. It was not just a name.

If however she divorced and kept the surname of her ex-husband, the rights and privileges of that relationship could no longer be assumed. Legally she was not the mistress (Mrs.) of her husband. She was only using that name nominally. Everyone would realize that.

Taking God's name - the implications

We can't freely take God's name just because we like it. God's name is only for those whom he calls and receives into a permanent covenant relationship with him. He receives the genuinely repentant person - those who leave their ways of sin and call on him for salvation: "Everyone who calls on the NAME of the Lord will be saved."

When the Law was given through Moses it was intended for a specific group of people, the Israelites. God separated them out, and called them to be his own possession. The Law was not meant to be a behaviour modification program for unbelievers. It was a blueprint for a relationship - a people in relationship with their Creator. The relationship was acknowledged with a covenant promise by both sides - like a marriage.

The first commandment is: "You shall have no other gods before me." This specifies a monogamous relationship with God, taking his name just as a wife takes her husband's name. Placing one's loyalty anywhere else is really spiritual adultery. In other words, if the Lord is not the master and sole delight of one's life, there is infidelity in the relationship. Then it is vain, or useless to take (claim) God's name; it is vain to assume all the privileges associated with it; it is also vain to assume God's promise of protection.

Biblical history proves that. During the times that the Israelites were unfaithful, they kept claiming God's name, but didn't realize that it was in vain. They may have been the chosen race, but he no longer was protecting them from surrounding enemies. In fact, as a form of judgment, he handed them over to their enemies.

All the other commandments hinge on the first one. When God isn't our first love, then our loyalty to him will grow weaker and we will fail to keep the other commandments as well. Subtly, we will stray towards other affections - and that is idolatry. As our love for God grows weaker, so will our love for others - those whom God has put in our lives. We may dishonor our parent or commit adultery. We may be dishonest, bear false witness (gossip and judging); or we may take what is not ours (stealing). The things of this world will consume our attention and we will covet the possessions and the lifestyle that others have.

We do not easily recognize just how intensely our hearts crave something other than the Lord. Recently I gave away a lot of household stuff. What a delight to lighten the load! However, soon my heart yearned to have some of those things back! I had forgotten all about those items until I gave them away.

Historically, many have taken God's name in vain by claiming to be Christians; but they were Christians only nominally. They assumed that God was on their side to protect them from enemies. But their hope was useless - in vain.

Today there are also many who claim to be Christians but have simply taken the name. They do not know God in a covenant relationship. Perhaps they were "called" only by their spiritual leaders rather than by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Thus they have taken Christ's name in vain.

Living in his name - the awesome privilege

1. We have God's power, authority, and protection:

Taking the name of Jesus has tremendous power and authority, so much that it can threaten those in places of power. When Peter and John healed a cripple, they were dragged before the elite religious authorities and asked:

"By what power or what name did you do this?"

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, responded:

"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... that this man stands before you healed."

The result was predictable. The authorities were threatened and so they decided:

"We must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

Likewise, when we encounter similar opposition, it is not always because we have misused the Lord's name; on the contrary it may be because we have lived by that name! God will protect us if we truly live in his name.

"The name of the Lord is a strong and mighty tower. The righteous run into the name of the Lord." .

In Jesus' prayer for his followers he asked God,

"Protect them by the power of your name...."

2. We conquer God's enemies:

"Through your name we trample foes."

David knew this. When face to face with Goliath, David bravely shouted.

"You come against me with sword and spear. I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty."

David didn't learn this by taking a theology course. He learned it when he was still young, when working as a shepherd boy, when he had a lot of time to develop his relationship with the Lord. He experienced God's power while in the fields with his sheep. He frequently saw God protect him and his sheep.

We too must live relationally in God's name in order to defeat our enemies. God helps us see this need through the trials of life. When we are faced with our own Goliaths and find ourselves crumbling up in anxiety, then we realize that we need to grow stronger in our relationship with the Lord.

3. We have purpose and meaning:

Jesus said, "Anyone who gives a cup of water in MY NAME because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward." In other words, in every little way that we meet a need in Christ's followers, we are doing it for his name's sake. This is eternally meaningful. It is never "labor in vain"

4. We know how to pray:

Jesus promised his heavenly Father: "I will do whatever you ask in my NAME so that the Son may bring glory to the Father."

When we pray in our own name - that is we have our own wishes for our own sake - then it is pointless (or vain) to tack the phrase "in Jesus name" at the end of our prayers.

When we sincerely desire: "Thy will be done." and "Hallowed be Thy NAME", then God will answer our prayers.

The consequences of taking his name in vain:

1. No relationship with God

2. No protection

When we do not live by the Lord's name, we don't have his strength and protection. The enemy subtly invades, causing fear, anxiety, pride, broken relationships, division, competitiveness, deception, delusion etc. Our prayers often are not answered.

3. No power to witness the works of God

When we live powerless, defeated lives, those around us see no reason why they should need or want Christ.

If we claim to be Christians and assume to have a loyal relationship with God, but don't really, then we are hypocrites. That is taking Christ's name in vain (falsely). Others can see through this insincerity. Hypocrisy is one of the biggest turnoffs to the unbelieving world. How many times have you heard unbelievers say, "I saw those Christians. If that is what being a Christian is all about, I want nothing to do with that."

On the other hand, cuss words probably rarely turned anyone away from Christ. No wonder God tells us to be either be hot or cold, but not lukewarm. In other words, be authentic. Either honestly admit that you are not a Christian, or be a real Christian living in the Name of Christ. For God's sake, don't fake it! Don't take His name in vain!

4. We face God's judgment

"Â... for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." "Â...for all have sinned"

You may protest: "But really, God understands that we are all just human, and we do try our best. No one's perfect. And we're saved anyway"

These thoughts may seem justified, but they don't absolve our guilt before God.

The Solution

1. Admit it

Next time we wince when you hear someone using God's name as a cuss word, remember this verse: "Â...you who pass judgment do the same things." Perhaps we have been taking God's name in vain by worrying too much. Let's admit, n

one of us have been able to keep our promise of total fidelity to God. "Confess your sins to each other...and you will be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective"(!)

## 2. Repent

Let God show us all our rival loves - your possessions, your job, your friends, your church, etc. Renounce your passion towards them and instead develop a passion for God. "Help us, oh God, our Saviour, for the glory of your NAME; deliver us and forgive our sins FOR YOUR NAMES SAKE.

## 3. Live in his name

Put God first in all, and then you will be a mighty witness of the power of God.

"We will walk in the NAME of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

Take the name of Jesus with you  
Child of sorrow and of woe;  
It will joy and comfort give you...

Take His name:  
In power...not in vain!

### **Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2011/6/12 23:14**

Awesome article Roadsign. I had seen this thread earlier and wanted to get on to comment that "Taking God's name in vain," has nothing to do with swearing whatsoever. I think that is one of the biggest misunderstandings. Swearing is certainly not good. It is just not what taking God's name in vain means. This article expresses the intent behind that law very well. Thank you so much for posting it.

### **Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2011/6/12 23:30**

Here is a example in the Old Testament of taking God's name in vain.

II Kings chapter 5.

In verse 16, after Elisha had told Naaman to dip himself in the Jordan seven times, and Naaman in verse 15 gave glory to God for what had come to pass, he offered a financial blessing to Elisha for what had occurred. Elisha responds by saying, "As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he (Naaman) urged him to take it; but he refused." Here Elisha invokes the name of the LORD indicating that the character, nature, and person of God was not behind the notion of being paid for what had been done. This was a free blessing and mercy of God.

In verse 20, Gehazi invokes the same phrase but says, "As the LORD liveth, I will run after him and take somewhat of him." In this case, Gehazi invokes the name of the LORD in order to engage in self service. Gehazi goes on to deceive Naaman, and even uses the name of Elisha in vain when he says, "My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." So in so doing he lies about what Elisha said. He first takes the name of the Lord in vain, then he takes the name of his master in vain.

God brings a strict judgment against Gehazi for this, and this is something that only happens three times in the Old Testament, that I am aware of, and that is the curse of leprosy. Here we see God's righteous judgment against him for what he had done, and it all started with covetousness that lead to taking the name of God in vain, theft, lies, and the inevitable curse.

If "Taking God's name in vain," meant using God's name as a swear word, we would see examples of this behavior in scripture. To my knowledge (and I am not claiming perfect clarity here) I do not believe you will find one example of it in scripture anywhere, where you do see hundreds of examples of the ten commandments being broken in every other way.

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**Re: - posted by White\_Stone (), on: 2011/6/13 0:16**

Thank you, Roadsign,

You have opened my eyes to a wonderful truth.

This will take some time to fully digest but it promises to be liberating.

white stone

**Re: What is taking Gods name in vain? - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/6/13 5:46**

To my knowledge and study of the Scripture, taking the Lord's name in vain has more to do with wrongly invoking authority from God over a situation, than to do with profanity or casual use. Like when Jeremiah caused a stir by invoking the name of the Lord over a prophetic message once, many wanted to kill him, but many said not to because He had invoked the name (authority) of God in His word.

I am curious, can one find an example in Scripture where vainly invoking God's name is defined as using it flippantly or as a cuss word?

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/6/13 5:50**

I would say that today many church visions and building programs vainly invoke the name of the Lord. Not all. But many, God has nothing to do with.

**Re: - posted by MaryJane, on: 2011/6/13 7:55**

Thank you for the things shared here. I also found a teaching on this topic and will be reading through it. I do agree that Father always looks at the heart and so there is some truth in the way we respond to issues that come up in life.

I notice that many times the use of the Lord's name is not when someone is upset or angry but just expressing emotion of any kind. Using "OMG" seems to be used all the time, whether someone is happy or excited.

God Bless  
my

**Re: - posted by enid, on: 2011/6/13 11:03**

I would call this an example of taking God's name in vain.

Leviticus 24:11, 'And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed, and so they brought him to Moses...'

He was stoned to death for what he did.

I guess God didn't take it lightly.

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2011/6/13 11:56**

ENID SAID: I would call this an example of taking God's name in vain.

Leviticus 24:11, 'And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed, and so they brought him to Moses...'

Enid, I suspect this is not what the commandment was primarily about - especially in view of Israel's tendency to drift into hypocrisy. Nor would this remote example portray the most predominant tendency in today's church.

KING JIMMY SAID: "I am curious, can one find an example in Scripture where vainly invoking God's name is defined as using it flippantly or as a cuss word?"

I don't think so. Also: Context is king, isn't it, King J: The 10 commandments were designed to preserve covenant fidelity

ty for the Israelite nation. Scripture is not a guideline for outsiders or even for surface behaviours. The absence of cuss words means nothing in itself, although that could actually be a form of self-righteousness masking infidelity. The psalmist understood that:

“But then they would flatter him with their mouths,  
lying to him with their tongues;  
their hearts were not loyal to him,  
they were not faithful to his covenant. Ps. 78:36

**Re: - posted by enid, on: 2011/6/13 12:04**

Ok.

So blaspheming and cursing God isn't taking His name in vain?

I'll leave it at that.

**Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2011/6/13 12:31**

I like what Matthew Henry said about this commandment:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc1.Ex.xxi.html>

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A strict prohibition: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

It is supposed that, having taken Jehovah for their God, they would make mention of his name (for thus all people will walk every one in the name of his god); this command gives a needful caution not to mention it in vain, and it is still as needful as ever. We take God's name in vain,

By hypocrisy, making a profession of God's name, but not living up to that profession. Those that name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity, as that name binds them to do, name it in vain; their worship is vain (Matt. xv. 7-9), their oblations are vain (Isa. i. 11, 13), their religion is vain, Jam. i. 26.

By covenant-breaking; if we make promises to God, binding our souls with those bonds to that which is good, and yet perform not to the Lord our vows, we take his name in vain (Matt. v. 33), it is folly, and God has no pleasure in fools (Eccl. v. 4), nor will he be mocked, Gal. vi. 7.

By rash swearing, mentioning the name of God, or any of his attributes, in the form of an oath, without any just occasion for it, or due application of mind to it, but as a by-word, to no purpose at all, or to no good purpose.

By false swearing, which, some think, is chiefly intended in the letter of the commandment; so it was expounded by those of old time. Thou shalt not forswear thyself, Matt. v. 33. One part of the religious regard the Jews were taught to pay to their God was to swear by his name, Deut. x. 20. But they affronted him, instead of doing him honour, if they called him to be witness to a lie.

By using the name of God lightly and carelessly, and without any regard to its awful significance. The profanation of the forms of devotion is forbidden, as well as the profanation of the forms of swearing; as also the profanation of any of those things whereby God makes himself known, his word, or any of his institutions; when they are either turned into charms and spells, or into jest and sport, the name of God is taken in vain.

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<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc1.Ex.xxi.html>

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I agree that all of these things are part of the taking (or invoking) of the Lord's name lightly and through vain and meaningless means.

Obviously, to swear by a Name of the Lord is to take the Lord's name in vain. I have seen people in the world do this. In fact, I once asked someone who constantly used the "God d--- it!" words if he REALLY wanted God to do what he was asking. The guy had a very puzzled look on his face that turned into a sheepish grin. I asked him if he believed in God. When he said yes, I told him that life and death, blessing and cursing are in the power of the tongue. I let him know that he was literally cursing himself and the things around him with his words.

However, I think that there is something to be said by the vanity in which people invoke the Name of the Lord so readily. How often have we heard people declare "God told me" or "God showed me" in regard to something? Of course, they also use the "the Spirit led me" to something too.

Now, there is nothing wrong with such a claim IF IT IS UNDENIABLY TRUE. Unfortunately, we hear people say things that are just untrue. These include false prophecies or personal thoughts about particular doctrinal matters. We have heard people say that "God showed" them something about how the rapture would happen before the period of God's wrath...and how others said the same thing ("God showed" them) about how the Church will remain on Earth during the tribulation.

The ease by which such people invoke the Name of the Lord as "proof" or validation for their view can easily be construed as taking the Lord's Name in vain.

Of course, with false prophets, it is difficult to point out the flaws in their words because they usually don't include dates in their proclamations. However, ever-so-often, someone like Harold Camping, Benny Hinn or Kim Clement will utter dates by which events are supposed to come to pass...but never do. We can point out their words and show them that they LIED and invoked the Name of the Lord in vain.

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2011/6/13 13:23**

Enid said: "So blaspheming and cursing God isn't taking His name in vain?"

Enid, It seems that you have opened up another aspect of the theme. The Israelite woman's son had a fight with a fellow Israelite. Clearly the problem was more than a derogatory use of God's name. It seems like he bucked the covenant agreement altogether – and scorned his entire identity as one of God's called ones (interestingly his Father was Egyptian). Maybe his sin equates with the unpardonable sin: Blaspheming the Holy Spirit. It's essentially unbelief - not taking God seriously.

It is reasonable to suspect that any flippant reference to God is symptomatic of this more grave category. But cleaning up language isn't the solution, as you know.

Just wondering: Why does the commandment get applied to cursing uses by those who don't even know God when sweet but hypocritical uses of God's name by those in God's household get off the hook?

Diane



Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2011/6/15 2:06

Quote:

-----So blaspheming and cursing God isn't taking His name in vain?  
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Taking God's name in vain most definitely is intended to be understood in the ways that have been discussed by Roadsign, Chris, et al, in this thread. Blasphemy and cursing, may be included way down the list, but really those things are surface issues, whereas truly taking God's name in vain has far more to do with false profession. "Not all who say unto me, Lord Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." I personally believe that to emphasize swear words and cursings to the exclusion of the fundamental meaning is to misunderstand and mis-apply God's word. Just as Roadsign said, the concern here is not with unbelievers but fundamentally with those whom would "Take the name of God." For their own appropriation. To take the name of God implies a grasping of it into one's embrace, whether physically or otherwise.

Taking God's name in vain may include, but is certainly not limited to...blasphemy and cursing. I know I said earlier that it has nothing to do with it, but I think this is probably the more acute way of understanding the swear words.

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." -John 14:13

"And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." -Luke 9:48

"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." -Mark 9:41

In these passages we understand that Jesus is not telling us to tack on "In Jesus Name" as a trite benediction to the things we do. To do something in the name of a king, is to do it in his behest. According to his desire, his character, and his nature, or in Christ's case, His Spirit. The names of God, if you do a study of them throughout the bible, are always synonymous with his character. As a matter of fact they almost are always descriptive. So we understand Jesus here to say, when you give someone a cup of water, "according to the way I would do it, according to my character, in lieu of my Spirit," you will not lose your reward. (quotations my obvious paraphrase.) If you give a cup of water, expecting a gift back from the person, for personal motivation, to make yourself look benevolent, or in any way that is contrary to the Spirit of Christ is to "lose" your reward.

Here is an exhaustive link from Blue Letter Bible giving the names of God, including all the names and titles of the messiah as well as valuable considerations concerning him.

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/study/parallel/para19.cfm>

Here are another set of quotes concerning taking God's name in vain. If someone has already quoted them, I apologize for being redundant.

"Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and a witness, saith the LORD." -Jeremiah 29:23

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes." -Jeremiah 29:21

"Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of naught, and the deceit of their heart." -Jeremiah 14:14

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die." -Duet 18:20

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Here again, in these passages we see further examples where God himself indicates what taking His name in vain means.