THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

**Lesson 5 - The Third Commandment - Using Jehovah’s Name In Vain**

**Exodus 20:7**

**Introduction**: The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied about one hundred years apart. In Isaiah 59:1-4 & 12-15, Isaiah decried the sins of his nation. One great sin was their total disregard for truth: “ . . . for truth hath fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter,” is the way the prophet said it. About one hundred years later, Jeremiah is weeping profusely over the same people and with regard to the same sin. Jeremiah told them not to trust their neighbor and that they “ . . . will not speak the truth.” (Jeremiah 9:1-9) Some may read the introductory paragraph and think the lesson will be about the ninth commandment rather than the third. However, as we will attempt to explain in this lesson, the use of God’s name in vain has a far more broad application than simply using God’s name to cuss.

Consider now the first two commandments:

1. No other gods before Jehovah.

2. No graven images (as though man could make a just representation of Jehovah).

*He is the Holy One!* His name is *JEHOVAH,* the eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient *One; GOD!* It is the most logical thing in the world that His name be held in reverence and not be tossed about in any vain manner.

Consider the meaning of the Hebrew word translated *vain.* “In vain” comes from one Hebrew word and it also conveys the thought for “unreality.” To use the Lord’s name in vain, then, means to use it in an insincere, pretentious, or ostentatious manner, not related to reality.

J. I. Packer simplifies the approach to this commandment by saying that it touches at least three things with regard to the use of the Lord’s name:

1. Irreverence

2. Bad language

3. Keeping promises

# I. V7 GOD’S NAME SHOULD NOT BE USED IN IRREVERENCE

## A. That His name is to be reverenced is obvious.

### 1. Matthew 6:9 “… Hallowed be thy name …”

### 2. Deuteronomy 28:58 “ ... that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God!”

### 3. Psalm 83:18 “That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth.”

## B. To use His name in idle, frivolous, and useless conversation is a violation of the commandment.

### 1. “Oh my God!”A common violation of the commandment.

### Someone wins a car on “The Price Is Right” and speaks of God with no real holy attitude toward God. The same if they roll the dice in Las Vegas, hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer, kick a field goal, or win the lottery. “Oh my God” is in vain.

### 2. Just recall and you will see how common the violation of this commandment is. Phrases in non-holy conversation are often heard, such as, “Well, Jesus Christ”; “For God’s sake!”; “Lord have mercy!”; “God have mercy!”; “Well, bless God!”; “Oh my gosh! (slang for God’s name)”.

3. Can you see why it is in vain? It is used for unreality, not in a manner at all sincere or real.

4. People will use the holy name of God in a way they would not ever use their grandpa’s name or the family name.

5. No doubt many of us are guilty of the lighthearted use of the name of God. We must let the Word of God govern our use of God’s holy name. We are not guiltless before Him!

**II. GOD’S NAME SHOULD NEVER BE USED TO ACCENTUATE CURSING**

(**Note:** That this use constitutes a violation of the commandment is so obvious we will not at all labor the point. When one is angry and filled with wrath and begins to condemn and damn things and people in the name of God, he or she in no wise intends to incur the actual judgment of a righteous God; they only are using His name vainly in their anger and fury. This, the commandment forbids.)

**III. GOD’S NAME SHOULD NOT BE USED VAINLY IN MAKING A PROMISE OR AN OATH**

(**Note:** With this point, we are moving to the primary application of the commandment.)

## A. Understanding the process of God’s Name being used in covenants, oaths, and promises.

### 1. Men would enter into some agreement with another with a promise of an oath.

### 2. To assure the other party of the sincere intent to carry out the promise, one would invoke the holy name of God. This was to impress the other party that the promise would indeed be kept.

### 3. Example from Carroll Simcox: “By invoking the name of God into the agreement, one party is saying to the other, “You know that I am a faithful servant of the true God; may He avenge you against me if I swindle you.”

4. This does not sound like a bad practice, since God actually sware by Himself because He could swear by no greater, when He made His covenant with Abraham. (Hebrews 6:13-14)

## B. How the practice deteriorated for there to be a need for the commandment.

### 1. Man by nature is sinful.

### 2. Wicked men and deceivers realized they could more readily deceive the simple if they invoked the name of God in their promises; they were trusted more if they used God’s name.

### 3. Therefore, the commandment for Israel and all men was/is to not take or invoke God’s name *for unreality****;*** in vain.

### 4. A man should not say “so help me God” when he knows he is about to lie.

## C. Read Jesus’ words of Matthew 5:33-37.

### 1. The Pharisees had become masters of the art of proclaiming the law while finding ways around the law.

### 2. They would not swear or make an oath invoking the name of God. They would swear by heaven or by the earth or by Jerusalem or by their head.

### 3. Jesus said, “No!” Heaven is God’s throne; earth is His footstool; Jerusalem is His city; your head means nothing.

### 3. Jesus taught Christians that we should say yes and mean yes; that we should say no and mean no, without swearing by anything or anyone.

### 4. To take God’s name in vain is nothing short of mockery of His holy name. It is to use it for unreality.

**Conclusion:** G. C. Morgan says that “the form in which this third commandment is broken most completely, most awfully, most terribly, is by perpetually making use of the name of the Lord, while the life does not square with the profession that is made.” It is really a good point. Jesus said also that many will say to Him, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy . . . etc.” only to hear Him say they must depart, that He never knew them.