

**EXODUS 20:7 DO NOT MIS-USE GOD'S NAME —NO JOKE
(2nd COMMANDMENT)**

BACKGROUND vv.1-6: *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth, You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me; but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

V. 7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

“Don’t add, don’t subtract.” When might that caution apply? When following a kitchen recipe for a very special dish—one you are making for the first time? When following the instructions for a meticulous repair job? Yes, surely The same is true with the Bible and the Truths of God. “Don’t add. Don’t subtract.”

The First Commandment very specifically says, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” Add nothing or no one to Him. He alone is the one who created you, who sustains you, who has provided the escape for you from the clutches of your own sin, from death that follows sin, and from eternal separation in hell. He is your loving Savior God. Don’t be so foolish as to add a different god into the picture. Then the 2nd Commandment says, Don’t subtract from the honor and glory of His name, the name for life, forgiveness, and salvation. Do not abuse and misuse His name.

The names of God are many—God, LORD, The Almighty, Jesus, Christ, Savior, Redeemer, Immanuel, Holy Spirit/Ghost, Comforter, Counselor, and the like. These names are not to be misused. There is nothing sacred about the letters G-O-D or L-O-R-D, or the way in which they fit together, or the sound they make. In fact, different languages have different words for God: English—God, Latin—Deus, Greek—Theos, German--Gott. The name or names for God are special in any language, because the One whom they identify is the Highest and Most Precious One. God’s names that identify Him are not to be used lightly, carelessly, or in any way that despises Him and subtracts from Him and His saving reputation—from His good name. He is the all-wise, all-powerful creator; the all-holy judge rightly angry against sins; the all-loving rescuer of sinners who took upon Himself the consequences of sin that sinners might go free. Do not misuse His good name of salvation in Christ.

Examples: To say, or to think, “I’ll be damned,” “God damn you,” “Damn it” are very grievous distortions and misrepresentations of God. To request God to damn—“God to hell” another way of saying it—to request God to damn something for reasons other than unrepentant sin is not what God is all about. *God our Savior will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth” (I Timothy 2:3-4).* Nor is it in your place to direct God to do that. Calling on God to “damn” is like a child calling on his Dad, “Dad, kill me! Dad, kill my brother or friend with whom I am angry! Dad blow up (kill) this expensive machine which you gave me, because right now it is not making me happy.” Such a request(s) is a very inappropriate of one’s loving earthly father AND of the loving God of Salvation in Jesus. Such a request foolishly seeks much harm to self or others. Such requests are called **“cursing.”**

God’s name is also used foolishly and for wrong purposes, when one makes careless and uncertain use of it in statements or promises by asking God to bear witness that a statement is true; and if not, then God should punish the speaker. Such statements or promises are called **“taking an oath”** or **“swearing”** by God’s name. (That the correct meaning of “swearing” is “to take an oath by God’s name”; “swearing” is not “using any inappropriate words.”) In a court of law, a proper oath is used to the glory of God and the welfare of one’s neighbor. The truth must be established. “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” Jesus Himself answered under oath when the high priest asked Him at His trial, *“I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said” (Matthew 26:63-64).* However, to lie under oath is a misuse of the name of the God. Even in our legal system recognizes that lying under oath is a crime, called perjury.

Take oaths in foolish matters, in unnecessary matters, in frivolous matters, in uncertain circumstances, is also a misuse of God’s saving name. “I’ll bring back your shovel tomorrow, I swear. I saw a wolf roaming in the back pasture, I swear. What did you do last night? I’ll keep it a secret, I swear.” Foolish, unnecessary, and uncertain

matters! When talking about swearing and needless swearing Jesus said concerning swearing and sinful swearing, “Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one (Matthew 5:37). Using God’s name needlessly to back up statements or promises is sin.

What about a statement like, “God! I never saw anything like that before!” The statement is definitely not cursing. It doesn’t seem to be swearing, but maybe it is. It’s a shortened way of saying “I swear to God, I’ve never seen anything like that before!” Sometimes we can just call statements “**blasphemy**”—a mocking of God and His name. No matter how impressive cursing, swearing, or blasphemy may make one sound, it’s displeasing to God.

Perhaps you counter, “But if I really don’t mean what such words say—they just come out of my mouth, especially when I’m blowing off steam—no o harm done, right?” Not so. The fact is, it is a very careless and thoughtless use of the precious name of the God of forgiveness and rescue in Jesus. If God gave you a wad of hundred dollar bills, useful for many things; is it ok to let one or two carelessly slip out of your fingers now and then? No big deal? Hardly. No matter how many hundred dollar bills you have, it shows no love and appreciation to the giver, to subtract foolishly from His gift. God has given the world salvation in Jesus, and you want to take it away, whether you think you mean it or not? *Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be (James 3:10).*

Stop intentionally and unintentionally misusing the names of God, and stop despising and scorning the nature and character of God. What is God all about? *“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”*

There are other ways to misuse God’s name. “**False teaching and lying by God’s name,**” saying God said something which He did not say, is a misuse of His name. Then there’s witchcraft. “**Witchcraft**” of itself is wrong—seeking to gain information or power from the devil—information and power which God has not given or revealed. Then to use God’s name in witchcraft, as some do, is even worse.

The real problem with all misuse of God’s name is the heart. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies (Matthew 15:19).* A heart and mouth that misuses God’s name displease God. **The LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.** The Lord does not just “close His ears” to such misuse of God’s name, as even a pastor may be apt to do rather than to scold an adult. The Lord does not just ignore it. I remember talking to a man about a sin other than misusing God’s name. The man replied, “Look I’ve been doing this for some time now. I haven’t lost my job, I haven’t gotten sick, the roof hasn’t caved in. God can’t be too upset with me.” Beware. Indeed, God works in different ways at different times. But the ill-effects of cursing, swearing, etc. run deep. It breeds further disregard for God and His Word, not only in the heart of self but of others—children and adults. It is sin.

Repent of this sin before God daily. Come to Him seeking forgiveness in Jesus’ name—the name that you so easily cast aside. Plead that God forgive your godless words and heart, and cleanse your heart and mouth so easily misled by Satan. For Jesus’ sake, He does! Ask Him to help you stop misusing His name each day. With His help FIGHT against ingrained habits and Satan. Ask others to help you.. God’s name is a most precious name in Christ your Savior.

Briefly, what about words we are taught not to say, words often called “swearing,” but which are actually “**vulgar**” words, words of the crowds of the street, words of the barnyard, words of personal matters. They are not taking God’s name in vain; they are words considered unrefined by society, words that present things in a most negative way. Attitudes of society change. Some words in the Old King James Bible, not considered vulgar then, are considered vulgar today. It works the other way too. At any rate, words considered in poor taste by others, cast God, and His people, and his message in a poor light. It’s best not to use them.

Martin Luther wrote in his Small Catechism? “The Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. What Does This Mean? We should fear [respect/honor] and love God, that we do not use His name to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, or for witchcraft. But call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.”

Do not subtract from the Lord and His Name.

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---