

TAKING GOD SERIOUSLY
Ten Values That Build Strong Families - Part 3
Exodus 20:7
Rick Warren

We're in part three today on Ten Values that Build Strong Families. We're looking at the Ten Commandments in this series. We're going to look at the third commandment that I can summarize in one sentence: God says, "Take My name seriously".

Paul Dickinson has written a book called Names. He has a hobby of collecting strange and unusually names. He says sometimes names seem to be prophetic. In 1941 there were two men who were executed in the electric chair in the Florida state penitentiary and their names were Will Burn and Frizzle. Recently there was a Montreal window washer who died by accident, falling as he was washing windows. His name was Will Drop. Others, he says, seem destined for certain occupations. Joe Bunt became a baseball coach. Dan Druff became a barber. Jeff Treadwell became a podiatrist. Goforth and Ketchum, two guys, became police officers and partners. O'Neill and Pray became partners in church equipment. Wonderfully Trembly, a psychologist. Zoltan Ovary, a gynecologist. P.P. Peters, a urologist. A plaster contractor, Will Crumble.

What's in a name? God says there's a lot in a name when it's His name. In the third command in Exodus 20:7 He says, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God."

Why is God so sensitive about His name? God says that your name represents three things: reputation, character, authority.

It represents your reputation. You've heard people say, "He's making a name for himself." When somebody has a good reputation they say "He's got a good name." When he's got a bad reputation, "He's got a bad name." When I say a name you automatically think of his reputation. Hitler, Martin Luther King, Elvis. It's interesting in the political campaign right now both Clinton and Bush have been invoking the name of Harry Truman, referring to his reputation. Margaret Truman said "Neither of you are like him."

A name represents your character. What you are cannot be separated from what your name is once it's identified together. In the Bible they would often name children after certain character qualities like Honest, Justice ... so that it would represent their character. Many times in the Bible when somebody changed their character, their life was changed, God gave them a

new name. Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel, Simon became Peter. God would change their names because He said it represents your character.

Your name represents authority. When a police stops you he says, "Stop in the name of Bugs Bunny!" No, he says "Stop in the name of the law." Why? Because there is authority behind that name.

If you received a call from a George Brown while you were eating dinner you might have him call back later. But if his name were George Bush you would probably take the call right there. Names have a representation of authority.

God says when you misuse My name it's no little deal. It's a big deal because you're defaming My reputation, My character and My authority and you are using it flippantly.

When we think about misusing God's name we usually think about swearing. But there are many, many other ways you can misuse God's name besides just swearing.

1. You can use God's name to insult.
2. You can use God's name to indulge.
3. You can use God's name to intimidate.
4. You can use God's name to impress.
5. You can use God's name impulsively.

These are all different ways we can misuse God's way.

1. YOU CAN USE GOD'S NAME TO INSULT.

This is when you use profanity or swearing to express irritation.

Somebody said if cussing and cheating are crimes then golf should be illegal. I heard about a farmer who was late home to dinner. His wife said, "Did the wagon break down?" The farmer said, "No, on the way home I offered a ride to the minister and from that point on the mules didn't understand a thing I said."

America is the most foul-mouthed nation in the world and becoming more so. Today a movie will not sell if it doesn't have any cussing in it. It's a G rating and nobody wants to go see it. They intentionally add profanity to movies in order to get an "R" because they want it to be a hit. Books and magazines and TV are filled with profanity. Even records now have labels on them warning of explicit sexual language, etc. The most well known garbage mouths in our society are the comedians. Eddie Murphy and other guys get paid big bucks to take the Lord's name in vain and people think it's hilarious. You can't avoid hearing it.

Have you noticed how many things hell gets compared to? Cold as hell, hot as hell, raining like hell, ... it's a generic term.

Why do people swear? They lack emotional control but the main reason is they do it to impress others. As a little kid the first time you swore you thought you were hot stuff, but the fact is weak people have to use big words, strong words to impress others. Any idiot can swear. It takes no intellect, no IQ, no education. I can teach a three year old to swear, a chimpanzee to swear, a parrot to swear. It doesn't show your maturity, your manliness or your liberation. It's stupid. It doesn't change anything. But we do it.

It takes maturity to discipline your speech, especially when you're angry -- you stump your toe, you hit your thumb, a guy cuts you off in traffic. It takes discipline to not swear. It shows maturity and self-control by not doing that. But people use God's name to insult and express irritation.

2. THEY USE GOD'S NAME TO INDULGE

We excuse ourselves and we blame God. "God didn't want me to clean up the living room today." "I didn't feel led to get out of bed." God gets blamed for so much. "God doesn't want me to honor that contract." "God doesn't want me to fulfill that business deal." "God wants me to do something different." "I've prayed about it." You use God as a cover for yourself and you indulge yourself.

3. USING GOD'S NAME TO INTIMIDATE

Some people are pros at this. They say "God told me what you should do." "God told me what's wrong with you." "God told me you're supposed to lend me money." Dishonest TV evangelists do this all the time. "God said, if you don't send in 1000 bucks we're going to pull the plug." Pull it and don't intimidate people. God says that's misusing My name.

Parents do this all the time. When you're frustrated and you've tried restriction and tried taking away their allowance, spanking. Finally you pull out the big stick and say, "If you keep doing that God is going to get you!" That's intimidation.

Spouses can do this in a marriage. "I've prayed about this and I know God wants us to buy this Jaguar." How are you going to argue with God? Intimidation.

In the world they call that forgery. Forgery is when you use somebody else's name to get what you want. There are a lot of spiritual forgers in the world who misuse God's name by saying, "God told me..." and you're supposed to say, "It must be true then". It may not be.

I would warn you about being careful about speaking for God.

4. BY TRYING TO IMPRESS

Insecure believers do this a lot. They often try to prove how spiritual they are by their jargon, by using continuous religious phrases, spiritual cliches. I feel like the more I use the name Jesus in a sentence then the more spiritual I must be. Oftentimes, I've met people who were really trying to impress me. "Bless God, that was a great sermon, Hallelujah, thank you Jesus..." Talk doesn't impress me, life style does. They pitter patter on using a constant jargon trying to impress you with their spirituality. They get this syrupy tone that I just can't stand. Don't turn God into a cliché.

Titus 1:16 "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him." We take God's name in vain when we claim to be committed to Him but we don't back it up with our life style. A guy says "I love the Lord, He's number one in my life!" Are you involved in any kind of ministry? "No" Are you meeting with Him every day, reading the Bible, daily quiet time? No. Tithing? No. What does He mean to you then? Just words.

5. USING GOD'S NAME IMPULSIVELY

This is one many of us fall into as a trap. When you use God's name as a convenient expression of fear or anger or joy or amazement or surprise. "I just caught a 10-pound fish! My God!" "Suzy's pregnant! O, my Lord!" "I just split my pants, My God!" You're reducing God to a level of a Wow! or a Far out! Don't make God an exclamation point. God says when you use myc name, you take it seriously. Don't use it flippantly. It's just as flippant to say Heaven, yes! as it is to say Hell, no! They are both wrong. They are taking spiritual truth and flippantly

using them without a thought. Using them impulsively. Don't use God just as a filler.

Impulsive means without thinking. Did you know you can even worship impulsively? You can take the Lord's name in vain while you worship. You can misuse God's name in church. Have you ever sung a song about Jesus Christ and you didn't think about the words, your mind was a million miles away? Your heart's not there. You're just doing the motions. Half-hearted. Routine.

God says "These people worship me with their lips but their hearts are far from me." And he says, "When you pray don't use a lot of meaningless words..." Do you ever use a habitual prayer? Like you're in a hurry for dinner and you pull out the standard one and you pray it? We've all done that and that is misusing the Lord's name. Have you ever used God's name as a filler in your prayer or used the word "just" -- "We just want to praise you, we just thank you." Why is it always "just"? Why do we have to say "just"?

Have you ever heard a prayer like this? "Dear Jesus, we want to thank you, God, for the nice day, dear Lord. And Father, we thank you, God, for all you do, O Lord." You're using the name of God every other word in a prayer. If my kids came home to home to me and talked to me as their father this way, I'd think they were sniffing something. I can't image my son saying, "Dear dad, I want to thank you, Rick, for the great allowance you've given me, O Father, that you give to us, dear daddy." Huh? You don't have to use my name every other word. You can just talk to me directly. It sounds more spiritual to throw all of those in and when you're trying to think of what to say next in a prayer. You can just stop. God understands silence. He says, "When you pray don't use a lot of meaningless words."

George Barnard did a survey recently and found that 66% of all Americans admit having taken the Lord's name in vain. But every body, including me, is guilty of breaking this command. There are many, many ways that we misuse the Lord's name other than swearing.

We rationalize it, "I didn't mean anything by it." Whenever I get in trouble with Kay over something I've said, I pull out a trusted phrase that I've used many, many times. When I have said something that really gets her hackles raises I inevitably say "I didn't mean it that way." Especially when I realize it's going to cause me pain. How many of you have ever used that trick? Kay usually in her gracious generous heart will excuse me. But you can't do that with God. It doesn't work. When you say, God

when I used your name flippantly, I didn't mean anything by it, and God says, "That's the point! My name is holy and you are not to use it flippantly." And God will not let you get away with it.

God is deadly serious about this. Here are the top 10 commandments, the ten most important things in life, and number three is "Don't misuse My name." We're not talking about some minor issue here. Leviticus 24 says that if a person was caught taking God's name in vain he was to be executed, stoned. It was a capital offense. How many of us would be alive way back then.

Don't kid yourself here. God says this is serious business. "I will not tolerate my name being misused." When you cuss or misuse God's name you are offending the Creator of the universe and may I respectfully suggest that you offend somebody else besides the creator of the universe. Why don't you say, "Oh, Buddha" instead. There is power in the name of Jesus. You can use any other name but when you say Jesus all of a sudden everybody gets nervous. You will not get away with it. God says, "Don't mess with My name. It represents My reputation, My character, My authority." When you laugh at somebody who's misusing it, you're partaking in their sins. God says treat it with awe. The fact is most of us need to bow our heads right now and apologize to God. I didn't realize how serious it is.

II. HOW CAN I USE GOD'S NAME CORRECTLY?

God promises blessing when you use His name correctly. I challenge you to do a study. There are literally hundreds of verses in the Bible that talk about the name of God. And there are promises galore that says "If you honor and reverence My name I will bless you with success, with prosperity, with health, with peace of mind, with good relationships" and on and on. Incredible blessings for the person who honors God's name. God takes this very seriously.

1. REVERENCE GOD'S NAME CONTINUALLY

Treat it with the utmost respect. Use it carefully. Use it lovingly. Use it as an act of worship. Don't just let it slip out flippantly. When you say "God", mean it in your heart.

Ps. 29:2 "Give to the Lord the glory due His name." Honor God's name. That is why my wife and I don't go see R movies. I respect the name of God too much. It's not the sex scenes and stuff (those bother me too) but really the greater offence is the

taking of God's name. I'm not going to set through while the Creator of the Universe's name is being made fun of. I'm certainly not going to pay to hear it. It's like a computer: garbage in, garbage out. Whatever goes in your mind will eventually come out in your lifestyle.

My littlest boy Matthew just this week said, "Daddy, I'm having a hard time with bad words because I was it all summer in the park." You know that, if you hear it enough it's going to slip out in your life. People say "It doesn't bother me." It bothers God and it ought to bother you. People say "I just tune it out. I don't let it bother me." Then you really don't love God very much. That's the bottom line. If my wife's name were taken in vain, I would not say, "I just don't let it bother me" and tune it out. No, love demands action. I'd have to do something about it. If somebody ridiculed or made fun of your mother, you'd protest it. You wouldn't set in silence. But many believers say nothing when Jesus' name is blasphemed all the time.

I want to challenge you to speak up when somebody close to you is using God's name. You can't do this with strangers, obviously. But I'm talking about the people who are around you, who are close to you, that you could confront about this issue. You've got to do it tactfully because your goal is not to condemn them but to influence them.

What has this to do with building strong families? One of the number one places we need to work on our mouths is in our home. We probably say more unkind things at home than anywhere else. Verbal abuse is rampant in families today causing irreparable damage to relationships. Work on this in your home. My kids know that there are some words they don't even hint at in our family. If they do they not only incur the wrath of God, they incur the wrath of daddy. I know one family who decided to work on this together. They made a swearing jar. Anytime anybody cussed they put a dollar in it. They all held each other accountable. Good idea.

You need to reverence God name continually. Reverence involves not only protecting God's name but knowing it. Ps. 9:10 "Those who know your name will trust in you..." God has many names, well over 100 names of God in the Bible, each one of them reveal a different aspect of God's character -- love, justice, holiness, the things he's promised to care for. The way you get to know God is to get to know the names of God. If you only know one name you don't know God very well. There are lots of names that describe God in the Scripture and the better you know them the

better you're going to trust Him and the better you're going to love Him.

When you get to know God's name and reverence Him on a daily basis there are enormous benefits to your life. "You God have given me the blessings you reserve for those who reverence your name."

2. REPRESENT GOD'S NAME CLEARLY

II Timothy 2:19 "A person who calls himself a Christian should not be doing things that are wrong." Our lifestyle can misuse the name of God. If you call yourself a believer act like one. If you're going to call yourself a Christian don't drag Christ's name through the gutter by your lifestyle. Your walk needs to match your talk. If you're a believer you represent God. There are two reasons why many people never come to Christ. First, they've never met a Christian. Second, they met one and it was a Christian in name only who claimed to be a Christian but there was no difference in their lifestyle. "If they're a Christian they're just like me. There's nothing different. I don't need to be a Christian because I'm just like them." If you claim to be a believer, a Christian, and use God's name and aren't any different you're a bad advertisement. God will hold us accountable for that. We represent God's name clearly.

The truth is that there are people all around you that are watching and evaluating your speech and your actions and they're checking to see how you're different and how you're different in your life style. So guard your mouth, guard your actions.

As a Christian, you need to be careful about slang. A lot of slang is just watered down cussing. It's profanity with a substitute. When you say, "Gosh, darn it!" It's the sane thing as "God, damn it!" or "Dadgum it!" It's the same thing. When you say "Judas priest" its the same thing as "Jesus Christ!" or "Jimminy Christmas" Gee is just short for Jesus, and Gosh is short for God, Heck is just short for hell. People say, "By gad, by gum, by jobe, by golly, gee whiz..." Those are just variations. They all came from profanity, taking God's name in vain. Do you think God doesn't see through that? Do you think He's not seeing the intention of a profane statement? Be very careful about your slang too.

3. RELY ON GOD'S NAME COMPLETELY.

Ps. 33:21 "No wonder we are happy in the Lord. We trust His holy name." There are 1000s of verses in the Bible that say that God has made a number of promises to honor His name. Whatever you do you should do it in the name of the Lord, trusting and relying on His name. Jesus said, "If you ask anything in My name I will do it." Why do we pray "In Jesus' name"? Because you don't have any right to come to God on your own. God is perfect and holy and you're not. Only a perfect person can come into His presence. I don't have any right on my own just to come to God and say, "God this is what I need and request." Through Christ I can. He's the bridge. And Jesus said, we're to pray in His name. It's a reminder that He is the bridge and we don't come on our own power, we come on His power and His grace.

Should I say, "In Jesus' name" every time I pray? No you don't have to but it's not a bad idea. It reminds you why you have the privilege and benefit of being able to pray. So you pray "in Jesus' name" and He said "If you ask anything in My name, then I will do it."

The bad news is this: you are going to be judges one day for every idle word you've ever said. It says that in Matthew. We will give an account for every idle word. I dislike that verse more than any other verse in the Bible. I think about every idle word I've said. I will be judged for that, so will you.

The good news is: You can skip the judgement. How? By trusting in the name of Jesus Christ. He will forgive you in advance.

Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." The name of Jesus Christ is the way you bypass that judgement.

John 20:31 "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name." Circle "life". You can pass from death to life, from judgement to forgiveness in His name.

That's what you need. We've all broken this command and it means we're all doomed unless we get a Savior and that's what Jesus is.

How many of you when you were kids because you used a cuss word got your mouth washed out with soap? I had my mouth washed out many times. It doesn't work. The problem is not in the mouth but in the heart. Whatever is inside of you is what's going to come out when the world puts on pressure. If I'm filled with anxiety and tension and turmoil and fear and anger and bitterness, when the world puts on pressure that's what is going to come out. It's like squeezing a toothpaste tube, the

toothpaste inside is what's going to come out. When I'm filled with love and peace and the world puts on pressure that is what's going to come out. Swearing is simply a symptom that there is turmoil in my heart and that there is so much turmoil it can spill over real easily if enough pressures is put on.

Luke 6:45 Jesus said, "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Ultimately the only way to clean up your language is to have a change of heart. Jesus can do that.

God says don't misuse My name. Use it with awe and reverence, Be serious. It's not a laughing matter when someone cusses. You're offending the creator of the universe. Some of you are saying "I've got the habit and I have to admit I've got a bad mouth." Maybe you picked up that habit in the army or school or your home or wherever, what do you do?

The first thing you need to do is tell God you're sorry and apologize for misusing His name. Tell him you didn't realize how serious it was. And you need to ask his forgiveness. Then you commit that problem and your life to God, give Him the whole thing. "Jesus Christ, come in and give me that new heart and tongue." Begin practice controlling what you allow in your mind. There are just some things you just don't listen to, go see, or read, because you know it's going into your mind. And you remember that He is with you at all times, you practice His presence. You don't usually take somebody's name in vain that is standing right by you. If you'd recognize and realize that you're never without God presence you'd be a lot more disciplined in your speech, because He hears it all. Ask Him to help you and He will.

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Exodus 20:7

"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God"

What's in a Name?

Reputation
Character
Authority

I. WAYS GOD'S NAME CAN BE MISUSED

- Using God's name to _____

- Using God's name to _____

"Do not make a promise in my name if you do not intend to keep it. That brings disgrace on my name." Lev. 19:12 (GN)

- Using God's name to _____

- Using God's name to _____

"They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him."
Titus 1:16

- Using God's name to _____

"These people worship me with their lips ... but their hearts are far from me."
Isa. 29:13

"When you pray, don't use a lot of meaningless words..."
Matt. 6:7 (GN)

"...I the Lord will punish anyone who misuses my name!"
Ex. 20:7b

II. HOW CAN I USE GOD'S NAME CORRECTLY?

1. _____ GOD'S NAME CONTINUALLY.

"Give to the Lord the glory due his name." Ps. 29:2

"Those who know your name will trust in you..." Ps. 9:10

"You (God) have given me the blessings you reserve for those who revere your name."
Ps. 61:5 (LB)

2. _____ GOD'S NAME CLEARLY.

"A person who calls himself a Christian should not be doing things that are wrong."
2 Tim. 2:19 (LB)

"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus."
Col 3:17

3. _____ GOD'S NAME COMPLETELY.

"No wonder we are happy in the Lord! ... We trust his holy name."
Ps. 33:21 (LB)

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven ... by which we must be saved."
Acts 4:12

"... Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name."
John 20:31

"The mouth speaks what the heart is full of."
Luke 6:45 (GN)