

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

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Dear Friends in Jesus,

Here is a picture of a sign. When you see the name on the sign, a picture comes to mind. You immediately think of the Bell Road overpass that takes traffic over Grand Ave. Associating images and words with a name, is true of other kinds of names.



If I say, “**Lord God**”, you immediately associate words and images. Words like “Almighty” and perhaps you picture the Red Sea being divided by the Lord’s almighty power. Perhaps when I say, “**Lord God**”, you think of **Jesus** and you picture a cross and the word “**Savior.**”

The God of the Bible has given us different names to remember him by. **Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Lord, Savior** are examples. These are important because they communicate important information to us. Therefore in the *Second Commandment* the Lord God demands that we use his name carefully and properly. As sinful human beings we struggle to do this. We have many questions as to how he wants us to keep the Second Commandment. As we review this commandment it will help us to **Use the Lord’s Name Properly.**

1. God’s name is given for us to use.

When I teach our youth in Confirmation classes, I ask them to imagine a worship service where we don’t know the name of God. They try to picture it, but they struggle so I suggest this, “*As the pastor I come out and say, ‘People, today, we are going to worship the “big something”. We don’t know who or what it is, but we will try and worship it.’*” The students laugh and they agree that they would probably not worship many times at a church like

that. God's name is important to us for a many reasons and he has given to us to use.

A. Sometimes people ask me, "*What name for God should I use when I pray?*" I tell them they can use any name in the Bible. What are the names of God in the Bible?

1. There are familiar names like: **God, Lord, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Jesus.** There are descriptive titles like: **Almighty, First and Last, Savior, Prince of Peace, Comforter and Counselor.** We can't list them all, but they are worth getting to know as we read our Bibles.

2. Why does God give us all these names? That is a good question. He revealed himself to his creatures, Adam and Eve, but when they rebelled and disobeyed, he didn't have to tell them anything further. He does not owe us anything. So it is a gift of pure grace that he still speaks to us in Scripture and tells us about himself.

B. Let's dig a little deeper. Why are God's names important? In Psalm 54:6 the writer says, "**I will praise your name, Lord, for it is good.**" Through his name, the Lord wants to bless us and save us.

1. In Proverbs 18:10 Solomon writes, "**The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.**" We run to him in prayer as the Lord commands in Psalm 50:15, "**Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.**" We honor God's name when we run to him in prayer. We are blessed when he answers. We honor God when we run to him and find strength in his name and promises.

2. A name of special significance is "**Jesus.**" The name means "**the Lord saves.**" The angel told the Virgin Mary's fiancé in a dream, "**You are to give him the name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.**" (Matthew 1:21)

Two titles that describe Jesus as **Savior** are: **Messiah and Redeemer.** The Holy Spirit dedicates many paragraphs in the Bible to informing us that Jesus, the Son of God, was chosen by the Father to bring us back to God. He brought us back into a relationship with God through giving up his life on the cross. So St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**" Again he says in Romans 10:13, "**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**" The name of Jesus is precious!

2. We are to use the Lord's name properly.

This is so important that the Lord gives us a commandment to protect his name. **“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,...”** (20:7)

A. Martin Luther lists some misuses in his explanation to this commandment, **“we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, or use witchcraft.”**

1. **Cursing** is using God's name to wish evil on someone. Examples would be *“Go to hell”* or *“God damn you.”* Even if we hit our finger with a hammer and yell, “God damn” that is using God's name in an unnecessary manner. All these are examples of sin. Even OMG, *“Oh my God”* texted on cell phone, unless it's a prayer, would be a sin.

2. Swearing is taking an oath. We can take an oath, but we shouldn't lie under oath. Lying or deceiving is bad because people or pastor hide behind their Christian name after telling a lie or deceiving. In **Acts 5, Ananias and Saphira** used their Christian name to cover up a lie to Peter and the church. The Lord punished them by putting them to death instantly.

3. There isn't enough time to cover all misuses of God's name, but one that should be mentioned is *neglecting to use his name*. Not only should we pray, but we are to praise and give thanks. Being lazy about coming to worship or to not give thanks for our daily food is a sin. So also is refusing to share God's name. Many of us are hesitant to talk to people while we wait in line at the post office or the grocery store. It is a whole other matter when someone asks about our faith in Jesus. In most circumstances it would be a sin to refuse to give an answer about Savior and salvation.

B. The truth is that we have all sinned against this commandment by misusing God's name. We need saving.

1. James reminds, **“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”** (2:10) Breaking the Second Commandment may seem minor compared to other commandments, but not to the Lord. He says in Exodus 20:7 and again in Deuteronomy 5:11 **“The Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”**

2. Jesus never did say a bad word nor did he ever misuse his Father's name to curse, swear, etc. Isaiah tells us, **“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”** Jesus watched his tongue for us. He was perfect for us. In Jesus we are holy in keeping this Commandment.

C. I like to tell the story to my Adult Catechism classes of a very elderly woman who was sitting in morning Bible class years ago. After I made the statement, that we grow in our Christian living she yelled out, “*I did it! I did it!*” I asked her, “*What did you do?*” She said, “*I stopped using filthy language.*” We all laughed. This prim and proper elderly woman didn’t seem like a rough individual with a foul mouth. She admitted that she had grown up with her four brothers who were foul mouthed and that it has been a particularly hard habit to break, but with years of focusing on the Lord, she had rid her vocabulary of such words. We were all glad for her.

The world pretends its okay to curse, swear and use bad language. In fact some consider it a virtue to be filthy mouthed. We have been elevated by God’s Son to be the children of God. Our heavenly Father does not want us to use his name in vain or to used filthy language to decorate our lives. Such talk only makes it look like we are a part of the world that is miserable, lost and headed to hell. In fact our refraining to use bad language and our using God’s name to worship will draw attention. We will have opportunities to talk about our wonderful God when people ask, “*Why are you so different? Why don’t you use bad words when things go wrong?*”

I believe that it is a process. Like that elderly lady it may take years of work to improve the way we talk and worship and witness. Jesus’ give us the reason to work at it. Jesus promise we will find amazing blessings as we keep the Second Commandment in our lives.

Conclusion: I would like to finish by reminding you of the great example and great comfort we have, when Jesus stood before the Caiaphas, the High Priest and the Sanhedrin on Good Friday. Jesus life was on the line in his trial. When Caiaphas put Jesus under oath and asked him to swear that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus was obligated to answer and to not lie. Even though it cost him his life, Jesus answered truthfully, “**Yes, it is as you say.**” Jesus in answering and answering truthfully, kept the 2nd Commandment and did not misuse God’s name. In doing so, he saved us. He was our perfect substitute. That is our comfort. Jesus also shows us that we can do what God commands in all circumstances. Jesus did die for his answer, but he was raised to life afterwards. We are to use God’s name properly and let God work out the details. We know he is blessing and saving us. Amen.