

#3. Keep God's Name Holy

(Exodus 20:7)

Introduction

Do you think it matters what you say? Is it important to be careful about the words that come out of your mouth?

Our words tell others something about who we are. For example, who would say the following:

- "It was a six-alarm blaze." (A fireman)
- "Set the shutter speed for my next picture." (A photographer)
- "I need some nails to frame up this wall." (A carpenter)

Our words are like clues. They not only tell others something about who we are, but they also show others what kind of person we are. Our words are like windows into our souls and show what's really in our hearts.

Today we're going to learn how important it is that our words come from hearts that truly love God.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, You are wonderful. Your name is wonderful. We honor You by honoring Your name. Please teach us to speak Your name with respect. Everything You are is wrapped up in Your name. Our words tell others what's in our hearts. Let our words come from hearts that love You. Help us so that we never misuse Your name. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. (Exodus 20:7)

Lesson

We have been learning the Ten Commandments. Can anyone say the first two without looking?

1. *Do not have any gods but Me* – God wants us to recognize that He is the *only* true God who created all things. He doesn't want us to let anything or anyone become more important to us than He is.
2. *Do not worship idols* – God wants us to worship only Him. Don't let anyone or anything steal God's place in your life.

The first four commandments teach us to love God with all of our hearts. And the other six commandments teach us to love others with that same kind of perfect love. By learning how to honor and love God first, you learn to honor and love others.

Today we're going to learn the third commandment.

Exodus 20:7

You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

Misusing the name of the Lord is using His name in vain or empty useless way. I can think of at least three ways we do that:

First, it is so common these days to hear people using God's name carelessly or in a curse that we may not realize just how serious that is. The way we use God's name tells others how we really feel about Him.

When you or I use the name of God or the name Jesus in a thoughtless way or as a swear word, we dishonor God. God's name is special. We should respect His name and use it properly, speaking it in praise or worship rather than in curse or a joke.

A second way we use God's name in vain is if we were to pretend to pray or praise Him so others would think we're being godly. If you are praying or singing praises to God and you're not really doing it out of a heart of love for Him, then the words of your prayer are empty and

useless. You must always use God's name in ways that show your love and respect. Ask God to help you honor His name and to protect it, too.

A third way we use God's name in vain is when we live and act and think in dishonorable ways. The other kids at school know you're a Christian and if they catch you stealing, or cheating, or swearing, or being rude, you bring dishonor to God's name. They'll think, "*He calls himself a Christian, but he lies!*"

We are to keep God's name holy. That means we should never misuse His name or do anything that would bring shame to God. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray in the Lord's Prayer, He started by saying, "*Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.*" If you don't really honor His name, there's no point in going on with your prayers.

What type of person would use God's name as a swear word? Someone that uses God's name thoughtlessly is someone who must not really know Him.

Why do you think some kids speak God's name without respect? Well, probably because they want to impress their friends. Sometimes using God's name in an ugly way can become a bad habit for some people. But when you really know who God is and appreciate what He's done for you, your heart changes towards Him. And, when your heart changes toward God, the way you talk about Him changes, too. Respect for God and God's name begins with a heart that is totally given to God.

When we become Christians, God gives us new hearts. As Christians, we want the whole world to know that we love and honor God. People won't believe that we honor God if they hear us using His name without respect. God asks us to speak His name with respect to show the rest of the world that we love and honor Him.

Chameleon Christians

Do you know what a chameleon is? It's a lizard that changes colors depending upon what it's sitting on. So, for example if it's sitting on the branch of a tree, it turns brown. In fact, it becomes the same color as the branch so that you can't see him very well. And, if he is sitting on a green leaf, it turns green, just like the leaf. It's almost like he becomes invisible. This is the way God made him so he can "hide" from his enemies.

Well, some Christians are like chameleons. They change when they are with certain groups of people. When they are with their parents or at church, they speak God's name with respect. When they are with some of their friends, they misuse God's name because their friends misuse His name. They don't want to look different than their friends.

It's hard to stand up for God when all your friends don't. But you have to make a stand for Him. Don't be a "*Chameleon Christian!*" People are listening to your words to know what is in your heart!

Matthew 12:34b-35

...For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart.

Our words tell what's in our hearts.

- What kind of words do you think come from a clean heart?
- What do we need to do to have clean hearts?

We need to ask God to clean our hearts so that we can speak His name with respect. We want the world to know that we are God's special people. Let's let only good words come out of our mouths.

Scribbles as Sin

[Teacher, before you tell about Monique and Jeremy, make two squares on the white board, one for Monique and one for Jeremy.]

Let me tell you about a girl named Monique. She had a very bad habit that she had learned from her older cousin: speaking God's name without respect. [Start to scribble in Monique's square.] She let God's name fly out of her mouth when she was mad or surprised [scribble, scribble...] or when she wanted to shock her little brother [scribble]. Monique's words show that she didn't have a heart that cared much about God.

Then there was Jeremy. He tried his whole life to please God. He never used God's name without respect – except for one time when a football hit him in the face. [Put one mark in Jeremy's square.]

- What do you think will happen to Monique when she faces God?
- What do you think will happen to Jeremy?

James 2:10

For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

In God's eyes, sin is sin. If you've broken one commandment one time or all of them all the time, you are a sinner. God will not live with sin—neither a lot of sin nor a little sin. God knows that we can't keep His commandments and that we all sin. That's why He sent Jesus, to die for our sins. When we turn to Jesus [erase both squares clean], He takes all of our sins away! That's the kind of God we have, loving and forgiving. I respect God, so I'll speak His name with respect!

The words that come from our mouths are very important.

Matthew 12:36-37

And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. (37) The words you say will either acquit [free] you or condemn you.

Your words reflect your fate: either you will be justified by them or you will be condemned. Which will it be for you?

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, You are good and great and mighty. You deserve all of our respect. Please help us to never misuse Your name. We want the world to know that we are followers of Jesus. Help us to always have a clean heart so that clean words always come out of our mouths. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What do the first four commandments teach us? (To love God with all of our hearts.)
2. What do the last six commandments teach us? (To love others with the same kind of love we have for God.)
3. What does "vain" mean, when it says, "*Don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain?*" (empty or useless)
4. If we use God's name in a thoughtless way or as a swear word, what does that tell others? (That we don't honor or respect God.)
5. What are some ways we bring dishonor to God's name? (By the way we live or act or think.)
6. How do you keep God's name holy? (Never misuse His name or do anything that would bring shame to Him.)

7. What type of person would use God's name as a swear word?
(Someone that must not really know Him.)
8. Why do you think some kids speak God's name without respect?
(They want to impress their friends.)
9. What does it show the rest of the world when we speak God's name with respect? (That we love and honor Him; that He is worthy of our respect.)
10. What is a chameleon? (A lizard that changes colors depending upon what its sitting on.)
11. How are Christians like chameleons? (They change when they are with certain groups of people. When they are with their parents or at church, they speak God's name with respect. When they are with some of their friends, they misuse God's name because they don't want to look different than their friends.)

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