

## **Mrs. Smith, What are you doing?**

**(The Third Commandment: Don't take the Lord's name in vain)**

### **God's Word:**

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."

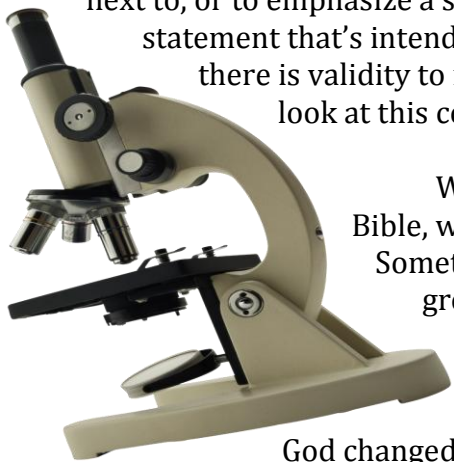
--Exodus 20:7



### **Breaking It Down:**

Webster's Dictionary states that to take something "in vain" means to use without effect or avail; to no purpose, in an improper or irreverent manner.

When the third commandment says we should not take the Lord's name in vain, it's popularly believed that the passage refers to using God's name in place of, next to, or to emphasize a statement with a word intended for cursing or a statement that's intended to be offensive. That is one way to look at it and there is validity to it but that's not the only way to understand it. Let's look at this commandment from a different light.



Well, what's in a name? As we look at people in the Bible, we notice that their names meant something. Sometimes God changed their names to mean something greater or something symbolizing His use or purpose for them. God changed Abram, which means "exalted father," to Abraham, which means "father of multitude." Saul in Hebrew means "prayed for," but

God changed the apostle's name to Paul or "small" after his acceptance of Jesus as His Savior and the Messiah. Do you know who was known as both Simon and Cephas?

2nd Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." Could this verse be part of why God changed people's names? How is it then, that to emphasize a negative action, or when speaking in a

passionate conversation that we throw God's name into it? As Christian musician Chris Tomlin states in one of his songs, God is the "name above all names." It is not a name to be taken lightly – or, as the Scripture says -- "in vain."

Leviticus 22:31-32 says: "Therefore you shall keep My commandments and perform them: I am the Lord. You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel." (KJV) Hallowed means sacred and God says His name is sacred. The commandment states that no one will be found guiltless who takes God's name in vain. That means all who use His name inappropriately will be found guilty of profaning the name of God. This commandment isn't as simple as you might have thought.



The second part of this commandment states: "because the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who uses His name in vain." (NIV) Like some of the other commandments, this one states the consequence of disobeying it. What does God mean here that He will not hold anyone *guiltless* who uses His name in vain? This means that if we use God's name in an inappropriate manner--as if His name is separated from His person, power and presence--God will find evil in us. When we call Him God, when we call Him Savior, when we recognize who He is, then it should be impossible for us to misuse, abuse and disrespect His holy name.



### **Living It:**

Let me share a story to help you understand the depth of the meaning of this simple commandment.

There was a woman from Springfield, Mass. Ms. Lopez was her name. Now, Ms. Lopez was B-E-A-U-tiful. She was smart, funny and just an overall nice person and desired by many men. Ms. Lopez liked to socialize. She had social gatherings scheduled for almost every day of the week. Most included gentleman callers who wished to keep Ms. Lopez all to themselves.

Then one day, out of the blue, she bumped into a man named Mr. Smith. Now Mr. Smith was a man among men. He was tall, dark and handsome, a gentle man, a patient man. He was known around town for being a helpful man who, despite his elevated social status, was not stingy with his money. He was a true follower of God.

So, Ms. Lopez added Mr. Smith to her busy social schedule and gave him priority. They began dating and all was going very well. As the world would say, they fell “head over heels” in love. When they danced, they didn’t even move, they just stood there cheek to cheek. When they went out to eat, they just stared at each other for hours before taking a bite of their food. When they talked on the phone, they played the game of “No you hang up first. No, *you* hang up first” as they said good-bye. And after a date they always used the phrase, “I miss you already,” as she got out of the car and she watched him drive away.

So one day Ms. Lopez couldn’t take it any more and she declared her undying love to Mr. Smith and she expressed the ultimate declaration of commitment between a man and a woman: “ I luuuve you” (she was Southern) and he declared it as well. He got on one knee and asked her to make the commitment of a lifetime - to marry him and take his last name. Without hesitation, she agreed.

So the day came and they married. Yet, there was a problem. Ms. Lopez, who was now Mrs. Smith, still had her social calendar booked, and what’s worse, she kept having dates with other men. Her friends asked her, “What is wrong with you? You have the almost perfect man.” Others said, “He is the ideal man. No one can match up to him. Why are you going on dates? You’re married.”



Ms. Lopez took Mr. Smith’s last name, but his name was taken as if it was useless. There was no respect for it. It was as if it was meaningless. It didn’t make any change in her life. Ms. Lopez had taken his name in vain.

Many of us agreed on the day we decided to follow Christ that we would live for Him, that we would not be ashamed of Him, that we would serve Him. We expressed this to the world and made those who were present at our baptism witnesses that our lives had changed. We are the bride of Christ because we are the church. On that day, we pledged to take Him for better or worse, in sickness and in heath, until death brings us together. Yet many times we live like Ms. Lopez and take His name in vain, both with our words and with our lives. We do it with our actions and with our daily testimony.

Let’s start paying closer attention to how we use the Lord’s name and how it reflects on Him. And let us not forget that God will not hold us guiltless. We are responsible for every idle word we speak. (Matthew 12:36)





### **Understanding It:**

- 1) What does the word vain mean?
- 2) Is there something that you promised God you were going to change the day you decided to give your life to Him? Did you change it? If not, how does that relate to this commandment?
- 3) In what ways are the vows of marriage the same as the vows we gave to Christ?
- 4) What is the significance of a name?
- 5) Can you name another person in the OT whose name was changed?



### **Doing It!**



This week, as you go about each day, think about the ways you may be taking God's name in vain with your words and with your life. Then repent of that. Make the change and become the church, the wife of Christ.