

## Swearing, Cursing, Oaths, Euphemisms, and Potty Mouth Words

**Matthew 5:33-37** <sup>33</sup> "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; <sup>35</sup> nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

**Matthew 12:36-37** <sup>36</sup> "I say to you that every careless word that men shall speak, they will give account for it in the day of judgment. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

**Matthew 23:16-22** <sup>16</sup> "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' <sup>17</sup> Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? <sup>18</sup> And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' <sup>19</sup> Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? <sup>20</sup> Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. <sup>21</sup> He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. <sup>22</sup> And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it."

**Exodus 20:7** "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain."

**Leviticus 19:12** "And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord."

**Numbers 30:2** "If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."

**Deuteronomy 6:13** "You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name."

**Romans 12:14** "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."

**Ephesians 4:29-30** <sup>29</sup> "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." We grieve the Holy Spirit of God by the corrupt communication which comes out of our mouths.

**Ephesians 5:4** "neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."

**Colossians 3:8** "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." The Word of God tells us that filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting, blasphemy, and filthy language should be put away from us and should never be part of our speech as saints of God.

**James 3:6** "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity."

**James 3:9-10** <sup>9</sup> "With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."

**James 5:12** "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment."

**Hebrews 6:15-17** <sup>15</sup> "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup> For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. <sup>17</sup> Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath."

**Hebrews 13:15** "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually."

**Psalms 141:3** "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips."

### What are some corrupt words and expressions?

There are certain words and expressions commonly used today even among Christians which we need to purge from our speech. Please prayerfully consider the following words and expressions out of respect for our Lord, the church, our children, other people, and ourselves.

**Euphemism** is a word or phrase used in place of a term that might be considered too direct, harsh, unpleasant, or offensive especially concerned with religion, sex, death, or excretion. However, it still has the same meaning.

**Euphemisms for hell, damnation, and the devil** are often used to avoid invoking the power or drawing the attention of the adversary. The most famous euphemism for devil was the expression "what the dickens" which does not refer to the famous British author but instead was a popular euphemism for Satan in its time. In questions, "what the hell" is often replaced by "what the heck" and in directive speech "get the hell out" is sometimes replaced by "get the heck out."

- **heck** is a euphemism for hell.
- **darn** is a euphemism for damn.

**Euphemisms for God and Jesus** are used by many Christians attempting to avoid taking the name of God in vain.

- **Gee, gee whiz, jeepers** are euphemisms for Jesus used as an introductory expletive or to express surprise or enthusiasm. These commonly used euphemisms blaspheme the name of our blessed Savior and Lord.
- **Golly, by golly, gosh, gosh awful, gad, egad** are euphemisms for God. When we use these words we are taking God's name in vain.
- **Oh my god!, OMG, or Oh my gosh!** are very common expressions used by adults and children.
- **Holy cow, holy mackerel, holy smoke** are used as an exclamation of surprise, amazement, or bewilderment. **Psalm 111:9** says "Holy and reverend is His name." People cheapen the word holy.

**Swearing by heaven** includes **Heavens!, Good heavens!, For heaven's sake!**, and similar expressions are statements in which the heavens are called to witness or support what is said. These violate the Lord's command when used as by-words, slang, or in a flippant, frivolous fashion.

**Misusing the attributes of God such as good, gracious, and merciful.** Of course, there is a legitimate use of these words that has nothing to do with God. We might rightly speak of a gracious host, a very good sandwich, or a merciful policeman. There is nothing wrong with using these words in this manner. These are merely adjectives used in reference to people and common things. Yet, we often hear these words employed in euphemistic ways that are simply misusing the attributes of God as by-words, slang, or in a flippant, frivolous fashion like **mercy sakes, merciful heavens, my goodness, goodness gracious, good grief, good gracious, for goodness sake, goodness knows.**

**Phonetic euphemisms are simply abbreviated profanities.**

- Shortening the term ("Jeez" for Jesus, "What the" for "What the hell").
- Using the first letters ("SOB", "What the eff", "MF", "BS" or "Bull", "PO"). Sometimes, the word "word" is added after the first letter ("F word," "S word," "B word").
- Mispronunciations, such as "Frak," "What the fudge," "Oh my gosh," "Frickin," "Darn," "Oh, shoot."

Perhaps you can think of additional words and expressions which God calls corrupt communication. Let us put all these words away from our lips and lives, and let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.

**Treating the Name of God as if it were nothing is a violation of God's Word.**

There is a connection between the way we **speak** of God and the way we **revere** God in our hearts. Irreverent speech reveals a heart problem. Irreverent speech includes using God's name in frivolous, flippant, or careless ways that are insincere, empty, purposeless, or mindless.

We should use words for God that are clearly understood by most people to be **formal** references to God such as words we could use for God in prayer and worship. I am discussing **informal** references to God and irreverent euphemistic speech in this lesson. Euphemistic speech includes words that actually mean God but are rarely used in prayer and worship - words like gosh and golly. People replace formal references to God with words like gosh and golly to try to clean up irreverent speech. For example, many people who would never start a sentence with "Oh my God" feel very comfortable with "Oh my gosh." In this way, many Christians dishonor God every day in their speech without even knowing it. They take God's name in vain several times a day without even realizing they are dishonoring Him.

I am sure that deep down in your own heart, you really do not want to offend God. Yet, some of you, when you first hear what I say, may think I am being over-sensitive. My comments may irritate some and perhaps even anger others. Nevertheless, I would encourage you, because of your love for God, please carefully consider this lesson.

**Why devote a whole lesson to this topic?** There are three reasons:

1. This topic is usually neglected, even in the church.
2. Even when this topic is addressed, it typically receives only brief and superficial treatment.
3. This topic so conflicts with the common understanding of our culture and tradition that it takes a lot of time to explain convincingly.

**What is the problem with euphemisms.**

There are several ways in which people treat the Name of God irreverently. For example, a person might say, "I made the incompetent mechanic return my money, by God." Here, the expression "by God" is used to convey intensity of emotion, but it actually means nothing with respect to God. Most likely, the person who says this is not even thinking about God. He mentions God, but he does this in a way that treats God as if He were nothing.

A more careful person might say, "I made the incompetent mechanic return my money, by golly," replacing the word God with the word golly. This sounds better to our ears, but if you look up the word golly in a good dictionary, you find it is a euphemism for God. In other words, golly actually means God. It just does not offend us as much. Euphemisms for God allow people to dishonor God's name without feeling bad about it, without offending other people, and maybe not even realizing what they are saying. Is God concerned about this, or am I just being petty?

I respond with one question. What does the Bible say? What does the Bible say about how we are to treat God's name? Not what does our culture say? Not what are the customs and practices of most professing Christians, but what does the Bible say?

I challenge anyone to show me any place in the Bible that grants permission to reference God in empty and careless ways. Show me any place in the Bible that permits us to treat God or the things of God as less than holy. In the Lord's Prayer, even Jesus avoids any tendency towards irreverence and flippancy. After beginning the prayer with "Our Father in heaven," this phrase is immediately followed by "hallowed be your name." For Jesus, intimacy was not a license for flippant and irreverent familiarity. God reveals Himself as a consuming fire, and when you treat God irreverently, you are playing with fire. **Exodus 20:7** says "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

**A problem is being ignored.**

However, many think this problem is insignificant. The world certainly does not understand why God's name should be honored. More and more, the media and Hollywood ignore the feelings of Christians when they mention God.

In contrast, I have higher expectations of Christians. Several years ago at another church, I taught in a class that they should honor God's name by avoiding euphemisms for God and avoid potty mouth language. However, I learned that the youth minister was teaching the teenagers that those words were ok to use. The youth minister said that those words were not as bad so they were not sinful. In other words, he said it is okay to pepper your conversations with those words just so you don't use the real words. I fear that this is a common practice of many in the church.

**Back to the Bible.**

So let's go back to the Bible. Regardless of what the world around us considers to be normal, I want to know what God considers normal. What does God say about how we should honor His name? That is what we will investigate in this lesson. **Exodus 20:7** says "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." We will be looking mainly at two phrases, "in vain" and "Name of the Lord."

Common usage of euphemisms for God, cursing, and use of oaths is a violation of God's command. Let's consider these three things:

1. The definition of the phrase "in vain."
2. The definition of the phrase "Name of God."
3. The response of God to irreverence in biblical history.

### **In vain**

First, let us consider the meaning of the phrase "in vain." The NIV translation of **Exodus 20:7** reads "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." This translation is accurate. It combines the word "take" and the phrase "in vain" into one word - "misuse." However, by doing this, the translators leave out important information. We would certainly agree that any taking of God's name in vain is a misuse of that name. But the word "misuse" does not by definition convey the **way** God's name is misused. The word "vain" does convey the **way** His name is misused.

Strong's *Greek and Hebrew Dictionary* describes the word **vain** in terms of three words: **emptiness, vanity, and falsehood**. When people use euphemisms for God without meaning God or thinking about God, they are guilty of using God's name in empty ways.

The false, insincere, and deceitful use of God's name especially pertain to dishonest oaths and perjury. The empty, frivolous, and profane use of God's name especially pertain to irreverence and blasphemy.

Let me clarify a few terms:

1. Empty. Using God's name in empty ways by speaking of God without meaning God.
2. Frivolous. Using God's name in frivolous ways when using it without necessity, for example, just to add emphasis to speech.
3. Profane. Using God's name in profane ways when treating it like something common, something less than holy, or something that does not require careful use.
4. Irreverence. Webster speaks of irreverence as "lacking proper respect in speech or action." He also speaks of irreverence as "characterized by a disrespectful quality or manner." This definition describes our common flippancy when we speak of God as the Man Upstairs or Daddy God.
5. Blasphemy. Webster speaks of blasphemy as "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God."

As you can see, by definition, blasphemy could be understood to include all forms of irreverence. However, most people use the word blasphemy for only the most flagrant infractions. Rather than try to distinguish between the two terms, I will use the word irreverence for everything from the most minor infractions to the most flagrant blasphemy.

Perhaps it seems unfair to lump euphemisms and oaths with more blatant and vicious forms of irreverence. To illustrate why I do this, let me ask you a question. Suppose you have two children. Which child would hurt you more, the child who sasses you to your face or the child who uses your name as a by-word behind your back? I think we would be greatly displeased by both. Would you use the names of your grandparents as by-words? Would you use the names of your parents in empty and frivolous ways? Surely not. Should we not, then, be even more careful in the way we use God's name? Perhaps these euphemisms for God are not as faultless and harmless as we might be inclined to think.

### **Name of God**

The next phrase we want to examine addresses the concept of the Name of God. In the Bible the phrase, Name of God, includes all the ways God reveals Himself. God's name not only signifies all His various titles. It also signifies His nature, attributes, character, authority, purposes, methods, providences, words, institutions, truths, kingdom; and **all** that God is, says, does, and commands. The phrase, Name of God, is comprehensive.

An example of this is found in **1 Kings 8:20** where Solomon's Temple is described as "the house for the name of the Lord God of Israel."

Another example is where God says to Moses in **Exodus 33:19** "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you."

In a broad sense, God's name is equal to all that the Bible and creation tell us about God.

Let's focus on just three aspects of the Name of God:

1. The Name of God is revealed through His identifiers.
2. The Name of God is revealed through His attributes.
3. The Name of God is revealed through His activities.

### **The Name of God is revealed through His identifiers.**

The most common English formal identifiers for God include God, Lord, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Jehovah, and Yahweh. We also have several informal words for God. A couple of the most common are golly and gosh. The Online Etymology Dictionary describes golly as a euphemism for God, first recorded 1775, in a source that refers to it as a sort of jolly kind of oath much in use among the lowest people. Similarly, the word gosh dates back to 1757 as an alternate pronunciation for God. The word lordy is a euphemism for Lord. Common euphemisms for Jesus include geez and gee whiz. The English language has lot of euphemisms for God.

You might wonder why we have so many. Some believe that when the Puritans and others cracked down on blasphemy and swearing, people resorted to euphemisms and oaths to avoid punishment. Euphemisms allowed blasphemers to keep their bad habits without getting into trouble. There was also religious social pressure. Profane swearing was regarded as unacceptable behavior in polite company. Euphemisms allowed people to dishonor God without offending bystanders.

But do these words really dishonor God? When you change the spelling of a word, is it a different word? Do slight changes in spelling sever their connection to their original meaning? **No**, in the dictionary, these euphemisms still mean God. Words are vehicles for conveying ideas. The words "God" and "golly" **both** are vehicles for conveying the idea of God.

Some people try to clean up their speech by using just the initial letters of words, rather than the actual words. For example, one young Christian was in a social fraternity where, in the course of planning the next party, the leadership decided the beverage of choice would be Green, God, followed by the word damn. When the Christian objected, the leaders agreed to change the name to Green GD, and they giggled gleefully over their clever diplomacy, while the Christian sat amazed and speechless.

Someone might challenge, what if I am not thinking about God? They claim that the very fact that they are not thinking about God when they use these words clears them of irreverence. They say to dishonor God, they have to be thinking about Him. It has to be deliberate - that there is no such thing as passive irreverence.

However, there **is** such a thing as passive irreverence. Indeed, passive irreverence is precisely what most people practice. Few are the people who literally raise their fists against the God of heaven. No, they simply live their lives as if God did not exist. They ignore Him. And they do the same thing in their speech. When they use names for God without meaning God, they empty the Name of God of its meaning. They remove the divinity out of these words. Any reference to the Name of God that is not done with reverence, whether it is direct or euphemistic, dishonors God. This is how people take the Name of God in vain in the context of identifiers.

Now let us consider the Name of God in the context of His attributes.

### **The Name of God is revealed through His attributes.**

The most precious attribute of God is His holiness. In the broad sense, holy merely means set apart. But when used in reference to God, the word holy transcends everything we know in this world. Used in this sense, Webster defines it as "Characterized by perfection and transcendence: commanding absolute adoration and reverence." That is why in **Isaiah 6:3** God is not just holy, but He is "holy, holy, holy." Yet, how often do we hear expressions like holy moley, holy cow, or holy mackerel?

But people object that they are not talking about God, that they are talking about moles, cows, and mackerels. But that is part of the problem. Whenever an oath is taken in a legitimate way, it is to be done only in the

Name of God. People are trying to excuse their unnecessary and profane oaths by directing them towards moles, cows, and mackerels.

We also know God is good, gracious, and merciful. Yet, how often do we hear these words employed in euphemistic ways? Of course, there is a legitimate use of these words that has nothing to do with God. We might speak of a gracious host, a very good sandwich, or a merciful policeman. There is nothing wrong with using these words in this manner. These are merely adjectives used in reference to people and common things. But what about these expressions?

- Merciful heavens, how could you do such a thing?
- My goodness, you were the best player on your team.
- Goodness gracious, what happened to you?
- Good grief!
- Good gracious!
- For goodness sake!
- Goodness knows!

Do you see the difference? In these examples, the attributes of God are serving as euphemisms for God. They are merely substitutes for more direct references to God.

Yet, not all such emotional outbursts are sinful. For example, the word wow is an emotional outburst that implies nothing about God. First recorded in 1924, according to the *Online Dictionary of Etymology*, it means to overwhelm with delight or amazement. Other emotional outbursts include the words oh and ah, words that are used even in the pages of scripture. There is nothing wrong with using these words.

Most euphemistic emotional outbursts occur at the beginning of a sentence. Therefore, if we just try to be careful in the way we start our sentences, we can eliminate many of these irreverent euphemisms from our speech. Unfortunately, this will require us to engage our brains before we open our mouths, but so does scripture. Christians should not be known for their quick one-liners. Jesus said in **Matthew 12:36-37** "I say to you that every careless word that men shall speak, they will give account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

At this point you may be throwing up your hands and asking, "What then should I say? I have tried to avoid ungodly expressions by choosing polite euphemisms, and now you are telling me that even these euphemisms are wrong. What, then, am I supposed to use?" We will get to that in a few minutes.

### **The Name of God is revealed through His activities.**

Let us examine another context in which we can take God's name in vain. We can take the Name of God in vain in terms of His activities. God is not only the God who is, but He is the God who acts. Just as His attributes have been used irreverently, His activities have also been profaned and made light of through euphemisms.

One of God's activities involves blessing people and He does this for all kinds of people. These blessings are always undeserved, for God is debtor to no one, that is, unless he sneezes. And what follows a sneeze? "God bless you." This phrase is used by the kindest people, and I hate to bring this up, and yet I must say that unless you really mean this when you say it, you are using God's name in a vain and empty way, never mind its superstitious heritage - the protection of a person's health during the vulnerability that was thought to accompany a sneeze. We are expected to say "God bless you" in polite company, but this does not make it right. It trivializes the blessings of God, and it profanes the name of God by connecting it to a superstition.

Another activity of God engages His power to sustain all of life. The God who created all things by His word is the same God who sustains all things, even as Paul preached at Mars Hill recorded in **Acts 17:28** "In Him we live and move and exist." Yet, how often do you hear God's sustaining power trivialized through vain expressions, for example, "As I live and breathe," used just to add emphasis.

Another activity of God engages His mercy to save souls. Surely from man's perspective this is one of the most wonderful things that God does. Yet people trivialize God's saving activity in expressions of surprise like "As God shall save my soul" or "Lord have mercy" when they do not mean it.

One of God's most somber activities requires Him to judge the wicked. Every day God sends unrepentant, rebellious men and women to hell. Hell holds the fastest growing population in the universe. Yet, unending terror and sadness awaits each new arrival. Surely, people should fear this, but they do not. Why? Partly because people have so trivialized hell. For every offense ranging from mild teasing to the most contemptible infractions, people tell others to go to hell. Sometimes they do it playfully and sometimes they mean it. Furthermore, People are usurping God's power as if they would, themselves, send others to hell.

Furthermore, people treat hell like a hot pepper seasoning, using it to spice up conversations with expressions like "hell yes," "hell no," and "what the hell." And if their speech is restrained by the presence of more polite company, they substitute euphemisms for hell such as heck.

There also are many oaths for the word damn including blame, blast, confound, dang, darn, dash, dern, etc. These are said to be minced oaths, because they do not offend our ears as much as the word they stand for. The force of the idea has supposedly been reduced through minor changes in spelling. Even Christians who use these words all the time mistakenly believe God is appeased by these minor changes in spelling. Meanwhile, a dying world grows increasingly indifferent to the judgment of God.

### **What is the remedy?**

Should we just make up better euphemisms where the association with God is more clearly broken? Should we just find gentler replacements for our minced oaths?

Sentence patterns that begin with emotional outcries could be improved. Euphemisms like my goodness could be replaced with words like wow, oh, ah, way to go, etc.

However, many sentence patterns should be completely eliminated from Christian speech. Consider these examples:

- The next \_\_\_\_ time you do that will be the last time.
- Where in the \_\_\_\_ did you put my car keys?
- How in the \_\_\_\_ am I supposed to do this?

Now, did not your minds quickly and easily supply irreverent or obscene replacements for these blanks? It was not hard at all, was it? Is it not clear, then, that these kinds of sentence patterns serve as place-holders for irreverent speech?

We need to get rid of them. Trying to stop taking God's name in vain without getting rid of these sentence patterns is like trying to stop using marijuana without getting rid of the paraphernalia. It is like trying to stop visiting pornographic web sites without removing the names of these sites from your favorites directory.

These sentence patterns have to go. In fact, this is the biblical solution. This is exactly what Jesus said to do regarding rash swearing. As written in **Matthew 5:37** "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

Jesus is telling us to simplify our speech. One way we can simplify our speech is by saying more precisely what we really mean such as "Oh, what a surprise," "Ah, I didn't know that," "What, are you serious," or "Well, okay then." None of these expressions require us to misuse God's name. All of them employ simpler and more precise speech.

Now, if this is the remedy to eliminate sentence patterns that support rash swearing, could it also be the remedy for sentence patterns that take God's name in vain in other ways? Someone might object, "Surely you are not telling us to change the English language! We have to have these sentence patterns in order to express ourselves." No, we do not! If we can learn to avoid clichés in our formal English papers, we can learn to avoid euphemisms for God and oaths in our speech. And even if we must speak a little slower, that is better than sinning against God.

Of course, the Jewish culture was sophisticated too. Jesus restricted their swearing. The scribes in interpreting the Mosaic laws had resorted to all sorts of ways to justify their actions and speech. For example, they taught that so long as men did not use the express name of God in their oaths, their oaths were not religiously binding. Thus, they could, without sinning, break any oaths where they had not used the name of God.

How does this sound to you? Does this sound like something that would please God? Not to us, but it did to them. Why? They had a long-standing tradition. Their consciences were corrupted by tradition. What about us? Why does it seem okay for us to curse and misuse God's name as long as we change the spelling a little bit? We have a long-standing tradition of doing this.

What does the Bible say about living by man's tradition? **Romans 12:2** says "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Our guide for how we speak of God must not be our tradition, for the familiarity of tradition has corrupted our consciences by making us comfortable with irreverent speech. Our consciences must be retrained, transformed, and renewed by God's Word.

### **God's zeal for His name.**

Does God care how we treat Him? Ask Nadab and Abihu what happens when we fail to treat God as holy. **Leviticus 10:1-3** says <sup>1</sup>"Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup>So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. <sup>3</sup>And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.' So Aaron held his peace."

Does God care how we speak about him? Ask the young man who cursed and blasphemed God in **Leviticus 24:11-16**. Ask him how it felt to be stoned. Ask his mother how it felt to lose her son.

Is God offended by our irreverent expressions? Ask Hymenaeus and Alexander what it was like to be turned over to Satan because of their blasphemy. **1 Timothy 1:20** says "of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."

Many other Scriptures just like these clearly show that God has often dealt severely with people who have not taken Him seriously - people who have treated Him with irreverence.

### **Summary and conclusion.**

This lesson has explained how our common use of euphemisms for God and our use of oaths violate the Third Commandment and New Testament teachings especially in these three ways:

1. By showing that the phrase "in vain" includes anything we do that treats God's name as nothing.
2. By showing that the phrase "Name of God" includes every way in which God is revealed, including euphemisms for God.
3. By showing God's zeal for His honor through recalling how God has severely punished people who have treated Him irreverently.

No doubt, some people will not be convinced that the vain use of euphemisms for God is wrong. People who love God often disagree on many things. I would ask that if I cannot convince you that this is sinful, can you tell me why it is righteous? Can you explain why we should speak of God in empty and careless ways? Remember **Romans 14:23** "Whatever is not from faith is sin."

Yes, it is inconvenient to control our tongues. But if we are not willing to be careful in the way we speak of God, what does this reveal about our hearts? In closing, listen to these words from **James 1:26** "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." Those are not my words but the words of Scripture. May they touch our hearts.