

OMG - Honoring God Through Our Speech

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The English language is constantly changing. Technology has added pages to dictionaries. There are new nouns, new adjectives, new interjections, new verbs and adverbs. All areas of our vocabulary have expanded to meet the need to name and to describe a myriad of new inventions or new innovations. In the last century, the world has come from “horse and buggy times” to cyberspace technologies. It is amazing just to think of all the wonders God has allowed mankind to unlock. The world really does seem to grow smaller every day as the ability to communicate from one side of the world to another almost instantaneously becomes more a part of everyone's everyday life. And with that communication comes a sense of power. Mankind often has such a sense of being “self-made” and so in control, sometimes even smugly overconfident in their sense of well being.

With all the advancements made in this world of communication, there is still a very basic problem. James, the brother of Jesus, highlights the problem about the tongue in his letter:

For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be (James 3:2, 8, 10).

The pitfalls for the tongue are many: gossip, slander, dirty jokes, lying, cursing, and profanity. Each is bad; each must bring daily sorrow to God as He hears and sees all that happens on this earth. One particular problem stands out as something which has become very common, even among Christians. Exodus 20:7 reminds us, “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.”

What does it mean to “take the name of the Lord in vain”? The word *vain* means “empty” or “useless”. Any time we use God's holy name in an empty way, or in a way which does not bring honor to Him, we are guilty of profanity. Matters so trivial as a broken fingernail can elicit this sin of the tongue. Our society has changed God's holy name from a proper noun to an interjection, and this interjection is heard so often that our “hearts” (and ears) have become

desensitized. We hear it and “don't think much about it” anymore. Our young people hear it at school. Even our toddlers hear it on television and parrot it back. Men no longer apologize to ladies when they use it—why should they?! Many women use it freely in their own daily speech. Sadly, I hear some in the Church using this term, and it seems to come all too easily to their lips. As God's people, we should **know** and **do** better.

Deuteronomy 28:58 tells us that God's name is glorious and fearful, Isaiah 57:15 that God's name is holy, and Matthew 6:9 that God's name is hallowed. In Ezekiel 36:21-23, God's prophet tells God's people that He will sanctify His name because it has been profaned among the heathen **by His own people**. Do we need such a message today? What we do and what we say while with our friends and coworkers who are in the world does matter. How can we be a proper example of pure living if we act and talk just as they do? The New Testament tells us that we live in this world, but we are not to be of this world.

The greatest command is that we love the Lord with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds. The world should know that we are Christians by our speech, our actions, and our love for one another and for God. We must be different from those around us. May we always honor God with the fruit of our lips.