



Taking God's Name in Vain by Careless Believers

Exodus 20:7, 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.

The above commandment prohibits speech that defames the sanctity of the Lord's Name. The most obvious sin in this regard involves the use of "Jesus" or "God" in cursing. A more comprehensive meaning of this commandment surfaces, however, when the words *take* and *in vain* are examined.

The Hebrew word translated "take" in Exodus 20:7 is transliterated *nasa* and also means "lift up, bear up, carry off, take, take away, exalt, aid, assist, desire, support, bring, sustain, endure, forgive, and swept away." In the hundreds of appearances of *nasa* in the Old Testament, "take" is the meaning of *nasa* less than 10% of the time, and *nasa* is translated as "lift up" or "bear up" more than 30% of the time.

The Hebrew word translated "in vain" is transliterated as *shav*. It can also mean "emptiness, vanity, lying, nothingness, and emptiness of speech." When related to conduct, it means worthlessness.

Exodus 20:7 indicates that it is sinful to "lift up" or "take" the Lord's Name to accentuate or promote anything that is unworthy, vain, or false.

When the meanings of *nasa* and *shav* are used with the Lord's Name, it is apparent that the awesome, majestic names related to Jehovah God and our Lord Jesus Christ are not to be "lifted up" to try and validate decisions contrary to God's Word or to emphasize an emotional response to life's situations.

For example, the phrase, "O my God" is known so well that a 3-letter shortcut (OMG) is routinely used to respond to almost anything considered out of the ordinary. You may hear people say "O my God" as a response of surprise in daily life. This expression is also used in electronic communication, concerts, movies, plays, books, educational pursuits, scientific discoveries, political discourse, and sports. When "O my God" is used simply to indicate an emotional reaction to an event or situation in life, God Almighty is not being worshiped; and this phrase is actually worthless, incurring justifiable guilt to those *lifting up God's Name in vain*.

Both unbelievers and believers can profane God's Name. Undiscerning believers who *lift up the Lord's Name in vain* sometimes do so by trying to link God's approval to contradictions of Scripture. For example, a believer may try to validate the dissolution of their marriage by stating "God wants me happy and I'm not happy in my marriage, so I'm filing for a divorce." Avoiding the fact that God's plan for one's life is holiness, not emotionally based happiness, those making such a statement about a possible divorce are actually linking God's Name to a falsehood. As a result, they *take (lift up) the Name of the Lord in vain*.

Careless believers also *take the Lord's Name in vain* if they try to convince fellow believers of the validity of a personal decision. One might say, "The Lord is leading me to . . ." or "God wants me to . . ." and this viewpoint is stated apart from prayer with little or no counsel from other believers, little or no Bible study on the matter, and little or no thought as to how this decision impacts current responsibilities or relationships. If believers disregard Scripture in decision-making and then use God's Name to buttress their personal, self-oriented decisions, they *have lifted up the Lord's Name in a worthless manner*.

Another violation of this commandment concerns the supposed ability to "bind Satan." When anyone proclaims, "In the Name of Jesus, I bind Satan," as a supposed solution for a difficult circumstance, then *the Lord's Name has been lifted up in vain*. In spite of pronouncements to the contrary, Satan will not be bound until the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on earth (Revelation 20:1-2).

People also sin whenever they determinedly *lift up the Lord's Name in an unworthy manner* for personal advancement. For example, some leaders are guilty of sins that disqualify them for church leadership (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9). Rather than spending the time necessary to reestablish a Christ-honoring reputation (which typically takes many years), some leaders will take a brief "leave of absence" and then return to a leadership position claiming to have "God's direction or approval." God, however, does not validate decisions that contradict His Word regarding scriptural qualifications for Christian leaders. As a result, those claiming "leadership" in such a situation are guilty of *lifting up the Lord's Name in vain*.

Some teachers *take the Lord's Name in vain* concerning health and wealth. Those who say that "God promises continual good health to you" often use 3 John, verse 2 to try to prove the point, viewing this verse as God's promise to all believers instead of a personal prayer request of the Apostle John regarding Gaius, a believer in the first century. Some also say "God promises abundant wealth to you," which is typically linked to verses taken out of context coupled with your giving financially to a particular ministry or person. If God's name is linked to supposed divine promises based on verses taken out of context, *the Lord's Name is lifted up in vain*.

Instead of *lifting up the Lord's Name in vain*, believers should honor our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by expressing their awesome, majestic Names only in a manner that testifies to their glory. **Psalm 8:9**, *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

This study is taken from [Taking God's Name in Vain is More Than Cursing](#)