



THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.



The First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught the faith. This commandment now leads us forward and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first things that spring from the heart and show themselves are words [Matthew 12:34]. I have taught above how to answer the question "What does it mean to have a god?" Now you must simply learn to understand the meaning of this commandment and all the commandments, and to apply it to yourself.

If someone now asks, "How do you understand the Second Commandment?" or "What is meant by taking God's name in vain, or misusing God's name?" answer briefly in this way: "It means misusing God's name when we call upon the Lord God—no matter how—in order to deceive or do wrong of any kind." Therefore, this commandment makes this point: God's name must not be appealed to falsely, or taken upon the lips, while the heart know well enough—or should know—that the truth of the matter is different. This is what happens with people who take oaths in court, where on side lies against the other. For God's name cannot be misused worse than for the support of falsehood and deceit...

Therefore, above all things, our young people should have this Second Commandment earnestly pressed upon them [Deuteronomy 6:7]. They should be trained to hold this and the First Commandment in high regard. And whenever they sin, we must at once be after them with the rod [Proverbs 13:24]. We must hold the commandment before them, and constantly teach it, so that we bring them up not only with punishment, but also in reverence and fear of God [Ephesians 6:4].

Now you understand what it means to take God's name in vain. In sum it means (a) to use His name simply for purposes of falsehood, (b) to assert in God's name something that is not true, or (c) to curse, swear, use spells, and in short, to practice whatever wickedness one may...

Therefore, I advise and exhort as before that with warning and threatening, restrain and punishment, the children should be trained early to shun falsehood. They should especially avoid the use of God's name to support falsehood. For where children are allowed to do as they please, no good will result...

On the other hand, children should be constantly urged and moved to honor God's name and to have it always upon their lips for everything that may happen to them or come to their notice [Psalm 8:2; 34:1; Matthew 21:16; Hebrews 13:15]. For that is the true honor of His name, to look to it and call upon it for all consolation [Psalm 66:2; 105:1]. Then—as we have heard in the First Commandment—the heart by faith give God the honor due Him first. Afterward, the lips give Him honor by confession.

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This is also a blessed and useful habit and very effective against the devil. He is ever around us and lies in wait to bring us into sin and shame, disaster and trouble [2 Timothy 2:26]. But he hates to hear God's name and cannot remain long where it is spoken and called upon from the heart. Indeed, many terrible and shocking disasters would fall upon us if God did not preserve us by our calling upon His name. I have tried it myself. I learned by experience that often sudden great suffering was immediately averted and removed by calling on God. To confuse the devil, I say, we should always have this holy name in our mouth, so that the devil may not be able to injure us as he wishes.

It is also useful that we form the habit of daily commending ourselves to God [Psalm 31:5], with soul and body, wife, children, servants, and all that we have, against every need that may arise. So also the blessing and thanksgiving at meals [Mark 8:6] and other prayers, morning and evening, have begun and remained in use. [Exodus 29:38-43]. Likewise, children should continue to cross themselves when anything monstrous or terrible is seen or heard. They can shout, "Lord God, protect us!" "Help, dear Lord Jesus!" and such. Also, if anyone meets with unexpected good fortune, however trivial, he says, "God be praised and thanked!" or "God has bestowed this on me!" and so on.

Large Catechism, I:50-52, 61-62, 69-74

Questions for the Week

1. What two meanings does the word *name* have in this commandment, and what, therefore, is God protecting in this commandment?

2. What does it mean to “curse by God’s name”? What does it mean to “swear”?

3. When is swearing a sinful misuse of God’s name? When is swearing permitted?

4. How do people use God’s name to “lie”? What are such people called?

5. How do people use God’s name to “deceive”? What are such people called?

6. What does God forbid in the following passages? How does this apply to us today?
 - *“There shall not be found among you...anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you.” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).*

- *“Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:31).*

7. What are the four ways in which God wants us to use his name? Give examples from the Bible when God’s name was used in these ways.
8. Read 1 Peter 2:9 — *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* What light does this verse shed on the meaning of the word *praise*?
9. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 — *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* What does this verse say Jesus did to save us from our sins against the Second Commandment? What does that truth move us to do with regard to this commandment?

Family Prayer

Lord God, we thank and praise you. Lead us to respond to your mercy and goodness by calling upon your name whenever we are in trouble, to pray to you, to praise you, and to give you thanks and so glorify your name. Amen.

*Answers to these questions can be found at
www.goodshepherdkearney.org/summer-catechism-series*