

Subtle ways of taking the Lord's name in vain

In this study, we will look at an issue that relates to hypocrisy, little foxes (sins) that spoil the vine, being faithful in the little things, and taming the tongue.

1 Timothy 3:8 - Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre

1351 dilogos {dil'-og-os} from 1364 and 3056;; v,

AV - doubletongued 1; 1

1) saying the same thing twice, repeating

2) double tongued, double in speech, saying one thing with one person another with another (with the intent to deceive)

One of the requirements of a deacon is that he not be doubletongued, that is, he should not say one thing to one person and say something different to another person about the same issue or incident. Nor should he talk one way to one person and another way to another person. He should not talk one way to unbelievers and another way to believers so that he gets the approval of the particular individual or group he happens to be talking to.

The fact that 1 Timothy 3:8 is addressed to deacons does not mean that other believers need not care about being doubletongued. God commands all believers to be holy and surely that applies to what we say as well as what we do as children of God who desire to worship God in Spirit and in truth, nor should he talk in an unholy way to man and then a holy (sanitized) way to God, the God whose "eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). This is the ultimate form of hypocrisy. God is no fool. He knows all about our lives from the beginning to the end. If we truly are His and if we truly love Him, we should be anxious to give Him the honor due to Him. How can we be honoring Him if our speech is more representative of an ambassador of the world than of an ambassador of Christ?

One very specific and often overlooked area where many professing Christians are doubletongued has to do with taking the name of the Lord in vain. The reason I say overlooked is because professing Christians often take God's name in vain in a subtle way so as to fit in with unsaved friends while not offending grandmothers and more conservative Christians. A special vocabulary has been developed to allow us to accomplish this. This vocabulary is called "minced oaths"... which is a term that has to do with diminishing the force or offensiveness of swear words. Just as we have devised a way of making a form of lying seem less serious, by saying that we are "just kidding" (see Proverbs 26:18-19), we have devised a way of swearing that seems less serious and less obvious than the use of blatantly crude curse words. Minced oaths are a prime example of hypocrisy... using the Lord's

name in vain in a way that tries to hide the fact that this is what is being done while taking offense at people who swear in a more obvious way.

The third commandment states:

Exodus 20:7 – Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Most Christians are aware of the third commandment and most probably feel they do a good job of honoring it and yet professing and actual Christians, those who claim to be ambassadors for Christ, violate this commandment all the time. One way that this is done is by using words called euphemisms:

euphemism:

the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant (Webster's Dictionary)

A related form of speech is called an "interjection" which is defined as:

interject:

insert an exclamation into a conversation without a grammatical connection

Many Christians interject euphemisms into their conversations all the time without even being aware of the fact that they are actually taking the Lord's name in vain. Here are some examples of those euphemisms:

gee, geez, gee-wiz:

euphemism for Jesus – used as an introductory expletive or to express surprise or enthusiasm

golly, gosh:

an exclamation of surprise, etc.: a euphemism for God.

dear God, oh God, oh my God:

commonly used expression whereby the Lord's name is used in vain.

my Lord:

a common use of the Lord's name in vain.

cripes:

a euphemism for "Christ"

darn:

a euphemism for damn.

egad:

a euphemism of "oh God"

goodness:

an exclamation of surprise or wonder: a euphemism for God [as in “for goodness’ sake!”, “my goodness!”]

gracious:

an expression of surprise [also “goodness gracious!”]

mercy:

a mild exclamation expressing surprise, annoyance, etc.

my heavens:

What do you think this expression relates to? ... “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1)

my word:

Where do you think this expression came from? ... “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

What about the expressions/exclamations containing the words “**goodness**,” “**mercy**,” or “**gracious**”? These three things are all attributes of God and in fact there is a verse in the Bible that mentions all three of these attributes:

Exodus 33:19 – And he said, I will make all **my goodness** pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be **gracious** to whom I will be gracious, and will shew **mercy** on whom I will shew mercy.

And as God says in Song of Solomon 2:15, it is “the little foxes, that spoil the vines”. Little sins lead to bigger sins, so we dare not wait until we are constantly using the nastiest of swear words before we start caring about the godliness of our speech. A verse that can help us understand the importance of paying attention to the things we think are little offenses is Luke 16:10: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”

Does it really matter what we say or how we talk?

Matthew 12:34 – O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. 36 – But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

James 1:26 – If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth (or, curbeth) not his tongue, but deceiveth his heart, this man’s religion is

vain

James 3:8 – But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

James 5:12 – But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oaths; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment

Matthew 5:34 – But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 – Abstain from all appearance of evil.

What is the harm in substitutes for curse words?

Some folks may think that it is better to use substitutes rather than actual swear words. However, if we better understand what curse words are all about we should have a better idea of why we should want to avoid all appearances of evil:

Even a secular English dictionary has this to say about **curse** words: a profane, obscene, or blasphemous oath, imprecation, etc. expressing hatred, anger, vexation, etc.

Some definitions of terms:

expletive: a syllable, word, or phrase inserted to fill a vacancy without adding to the sense or an exclamatory word or phrase; especially one that is obscene or profane

slang: an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech

blaspheme: to speak irreverently or profanely of or to God or sacred things.

987 blasphemeo {blas-fay-meh'-o}

987 blasphemeo {blas-fay-meh'-o}

from 989; TDNT – 1:621,107; vAV – blaspheme 17, speak evil of 10, rail on 2, blasphemer 1, speak blasphemy 1, blasphemously 1, misc 3; 351) to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate, blaspheme2) to be evil spoken of, reviled, railed at

Do we want to be counted among God's enemies and among the foolish?

Psalms 74:18 – Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

Do we want behave like foolish people (i.e. the lost)?

Revelation 16:11 – And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Should we resort to complaining and blaspheming God, like the heathen do when they have pain or problems?

Leviticus 24:16 – And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.

If God hates His holy name be blasphemed, why would a true child of His want to mimic those who commit this grievous offence upon our blessed God and Father?

Matthew 15:18 – But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Perhaps we should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, if we are acting more like the world than like a new creature in Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Peter 2:10 – But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

Are we not speaking evil of the greatest of all Dignitaries (the King of Kings and Lord of Lords), when we take his name lightly by using it as a sanitized, Christianized swear word?

Philippians 2:14 – Do all things without murmurings and disputings

Are we using minced oaths at times when we are expressing displeasure with some situation or some person, when we should be doing things without murmuring and instead, giving thanks in everything?

Some Bible verses pertaining to blasphemy:

Psalms 74:10 – O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

1 Timothy 1:20 – Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

2 Timothy 3:2 – For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy

James 2:7 – Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

2 Kings 19:22 – Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 52:5 – Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed.

Which Spirit is being glorified by our manner of speech?

1 Corinthians 2:12 – Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

The spirit of the world wants to take God's name in vain but not only that. The world wants to sin in a way that does not appear to be outright sin, if they think it is to their advantage to appear better than they are.

Mark 16:17 - And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

John 12:43 - For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

What should the believer's focus be?

What purpose could a Christian possibly have for using words that sound like swear words?

What purpose could a Christian possibly have for using exclamations that sound like the Lord's name?

Perhaps we like to sound like the world but "not quite as bad". The world uses words to express shock or display their displeasure over some person or situation. A believer should be giving thanks in all situations:

Ephesians 5:19 - Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Colossians 1:10 - That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; 12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Colossians 3:2 - Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

How a believer can tame his tongue

First, he has to be a believer. Then a believer tames his tongue by focusing on God and His blessings and upon the believer's obligation to thank his or her benevolent heavenly Father:

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual

songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

If we are not spending quality time in the Word, how can we do these things?

Colossians 4:5 – Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Ecclesiastes 12:10 – The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

Where and how do we find words that are acceptable to God?

Psalms 119:105 – Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Where and how do avoid using words that are NOT acceptable to God?

Ecclesiastes 5:2 – Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

James 1:19 – Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath

Proverbs 29:20 – Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Proverbs 17:27 – He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

Proverbs 10:19 – In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

Colossians 3:8 – But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication <148> out of your mouth.

148 aischrologia {ahee-skhol-og-ee'-ah} from 150 and 3056;; n f
AV – filthy communication 1; 1
1) foul speaking, low and obscene speech

Summary

The tendency in the use of expletives [and euphemisms] is to find the milder ones becoming less expressive of our feelings, to discard them and use stronger ones in their stead. A careless following of others in the use of ... minced oaths will dull our own spiritual sensitiveness, and will weaken our Christian testimony. To gain victory in this matter of full obedience to our Lord Jesus, we need to make the prayer of David our daily petition: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in they sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

(Taken from "The Sunday School Times" in an article titled "Minced Oaths")
