

Back to the Basics

The Ten Commandments Pt. 2

The Second Commandment is often seen as a commandment against profanity, which we interpret as using God's name in expletives. However, to "profane" something means to take the sacred and make it common. Everything is in one of two classes: sacred or profane (common). So, we see that misusing God's name is not just using it as an expletive but using it in a way that takes away from its divinity. To this goal, Israelites used the name YHWH for prayer and praise and in worship. It was used sparingly in everyday life.

The Second Commandment

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

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

We say "fear and love God" in the explanation to all the Commandments because all Commandments flow from the fear and love of God (**Ps. 111:10; John 14:23**). God forbids us to misuse His name in this Commandment. We misuse it when we use it uselessly or carelessly or when we use it in the wrong way.

- Cursing is speaking evil of God or mocking Him, the way some of the Jews accused Jesus of being possessed by a demon (**John 8:48-59**). It is also calling down anger and punishment on ourselves, like the people in Jesus' trial (**Matt. 27:25**) or on others, like James and John asked Jesus if they should ask God to destroy a Samaritan village (**Luke 9:51-55**).
 - When things aren't going my way, have I ever accused God of being unfair?
 - Have I ever said something like, "May God strike me dead if ..."
 - Have I ever asked God for vengeance upon my enemies, or wished harm to them?
- Swearing is taking an oath. Sometimes it is necessary, such as in court, an oath of office, or wedding vows. What is forbidden is when it's done thoughtlessly or falsely, or in unimportant matters (**Lev. 19:12; Matt. 5:22-27**).
 - Some Christians believe that all oaths are wrong. For them, when asked in a court of law to swear on the Bible, they can merely say, "I affirm", meaning that they always tell the truth and do not need to swear an oath.
 - Have I ever said, "I swear, I'm telling the truth"?
 - Have I ever said, "Cross my heart and hope to die"?
- Using satanic arts is participating in occult practices (**Deut. 18:10-12**), seeking the aid of such practitioners (**Lev. 19:31**), and depending on horoscopes or similar ways to foretell the future (**Eccl. 7:14**).
 - "If idolatry is worshiping what is not God, divination is seeking knowledge (especially knowledge of the future) without reference to God."¹
 - Have I held fast to the God who knows the future, or sought help elsewhere?

¹ Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Zechariah*: InterVarsity Press, 2003, p. 139.

- Lying and deceiving by God's name is teaching false doctrine, claiming it comes from God (**Deut. 12:32**) and covering an unbelieving heart or pretending to be a Christian (hypocrisy) (**Matt. 7:21; 15:8**).
 - Do I hide behind a mask?

The positive side of this Commandment is to call upon God in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks (**Ps. 50:15; 103:1; 118:1**). Do I use God's name rightly, or do I misuse it? Like all the Commandments, the Commandment to take God's name seriously affects our whole life. We praise His name or defile it by everything we say and do. Using God's name rightly gives honor and glory to Him. Profaning His name in any way brings disgrace to Him. After all, as His children, we bear His name—**Christian**.

*The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace.*
