

USING GOD'S NAME WITHOUT GUILT

Exodus 20:7

Good morning! Today is Sept. 11, the very day in which thousands of people in New York lost their lives due to the unconscionable actions of individuals who carried out a most heinous crime in the name of their God. These terrorists thought they were pleasing their God by committing such act. Throughout history, in fact, groups and individuals have terrorized people or have waged battles in the name of their religion or their God thinking that their God approved of such actions. Sadly, this happens even among Christians. We've heard or read about anti-abortionists who bombed abortion clinics or attacked abortion doctors in the name of Jesus. Interestingly, there are doctors who perform abortions in the name of Jesus like a doctor in Mississippi who feels like it's his ministry because Jesus called him to do it. Unbelievable. People do crazy things in the name of God. Which, of course, cast a black eye on the religion or the God they represent.

Let's open to Exodus 20, Verse 7. We're in the series on the Ten Commandments. **"Living a Fulfilled Life"**. The first four deal with our relationship to God. Today, I'm going to talk about the third commandment and I'm going to tackle the subject of **"Using God's Name Without Guilt"**. Exodus 20, Verse 7, and let's read together, ***"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."***

Now what's the big deal? What's so special about God's name that God makes it one of his Ten Commandments, don't misuse it? The Hebrews believed that your name represented your character, your personality, your person, and God's name is God's character. And if you're going to learn to be serious with God, you've got to learn how to use God's name correctly.

First, what is God's name? In the Old Testament, he revealed himself to Moses as "I Am Who I Am". That phrase is from which the Hebrew letters **YHWH**, called the **Tetragrammaton**, comes from and it looks like that. In Hebrew, that's how the name of God looks like. The Hebrews wrote from right to left, btw.

So, we have YHWH. How should it be pronounced? No one knows for sure. Why, because the Hebrew alphabet doesn't have vowels. If you were a Hebrew in Moses' time, you will know, of course. Unfortunately, throughout history after many years since God gave the Ten Commandments, the Hebrews didn't pronounce God's name because they were afraid of misusing God's name. They literally didn't want to misuse God's name and break the 3rd commandment and so they didn't use or pronounce God's name at all until no one knows how to pronounce it anymore.

How come we use Yahweh? Well, majority of scholars think that it's how it's pronounced but I disagree. The vowels were just inserted later on to make it pronounceable. A stands for Adonai which means Lord and E stands for Elohim which means God. But it was arbitrary. It could have been Elohim first and then Adonai, which makes it Yehwah. It is so arbitrary that one scholar even proposed "Yahu". Sounds familiar, right? Anyway, in your Bibles, especially in the NIV, when you see the word Lord in all caps like this: **LORD**, then it means that the Tetragrammaton was originally there. If small letters like this, **Lord**, then it's simply "Adonai". But some Bible versions like the KJV still insert the name of God which is Jehovah.

So, why Jehovah? It is the Latinized version of Yahweh. You know how our names appear different in another language. My name Rosello is Russell in English. Andres is Andrew. Maria is Mary. Elvin is Elvin. Corazon is Heart.

Anyway, just like in the case with Yahweh, certain Bible scholars inserted vowels into JHVH which is the Latin form of YHWH to make the tetragrammaton pronounceable, contending that JHVH is actually three syllables. Now, some scholars argue against using Jehovah because they say J is not a Hebrew letter. But how come we say Jesus or Joshua or Jeremiah? Obviously, those names are Latinized as well.

To me, the bottom line is, it doesn't matter how you pronounce the Tetragrammaton. It is a debate that will be settled only in heaven. Don't make a big deal out of it or be dogmatic about it because if you're not 100% sure, you're not sure, and I'm sure about that. No one is ever 100% sure regarding the pronunciation of God's name. As for me, I pronounce it Yahweh sometimes, Jehovah sometimes. It doesn't matter because I know who the name stands for. So, I hope that's clear, and we'll not get hung up with the pronunciation of God's name.

One thing is clear, in the New Testament, God's name is Jesus and we'll never get wrong with his name, amen?

Ok, now, instead of being conscious about mispronouncing God's name, let's talk about being conscious about misusing God's name.

First, let's just look this morning at those times we often misuse God's name. **When do we misuse God's name? Number one, we often misuse God's name when we're irritated.**

Now, when we're irritated, things come out of our mouths without our control. We lose control of our tongues. More often than not, we swear or curse. This is the first thing that comes to people's minds when they read, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" as the KJV puts it. Swearing, cursing. The dictionary says that swearing or cursing is "To use obscene or blasphemous language". In other words, it is treating something sacred with abuse, contempt or

irreverence. Now, how many of you agree that our society is horrible at profanity? I mean that's kind of obvious, isn't it? Books, records, magazines, videos, movies, TV shows, comedians, many of them have garbage mouths basically today. I mean, in countless movies, they can't say a sentence without taking the Lord's name in vain. Jesus Christ, they say in the movies. Well, not only in the movies. In real life, we hear people casually use the Lord's name in vain. You hear people say also, "Oh Jeez! Gee!" Do you know they're short cust for Jesus? How about, "Omigosh!" Which is slang for Oh my God!

You know, we usually cuss when we are uptight or we're frustrated or we're angry. Somebody cuts you off in traffic, you stub your toe, you hit your thumb, the waiter spills something on you and you just say, God damn it. God damn you. Darn it. It's a lack of emotional control. Swearing or cussing is a sign of emotional immaturity. But that's just one instance of misusing God's name.

Another instance of misusing God's name is **when we indulge ourselves**. What do I mean by this? When we use God to make an excuse to make us feel better. "I feel God has called me to skip church today." "I don't feel God wants me to help out." God gets blamed for so much just to justify our desires. We also hear some say, "I know it's wrong, but I know God will forgive me." That's misusing God's name to satisfy our selfish desires.

We also misuse God's name **when we intimidate**. And some people are a pro at this. They use God to kind of back up their weak argument. They bring God in to reinforce their argument or to manipulate other people. You hear people say things like, "God told me to give you this message". Or they'll say, "God has revealed to me what's wrong with you". Now, in society when you take somebody else's name and you use it for your own purpose, that's called forgery. I wonder how many spiritual forgers do we have in the world? We're using God to manipulate other people to get our own desires.

Sometimes we misuse God's name **when we want to impress**. Have you ever met anybody and have the distinct feeling that this guy is trying to impress with his spiritualness, a guy who is a spiritual show off? They want you to count how many times they say praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Oh, and you get in constant pattern of religious clichés, Bless God, glory hallelujah, thank you Jesus, hallelujah, and you know their mind isn't even there. Like I attended one conference and during our workshop, the instructor kept saying “Praise the Lord” after each sentence he said. It seemed automatic. Now, don't get me wrong. Of course you ought to praise the Lord. But don't make God a cliché. Where you just say it as a filler in a conversation. Like these two ladies: “You know, I had this unusual experience.” Oh, bless God. “I was walking down the street when I saw Jeannie coming down my way” Bless Jesus. “I looked at her and she looked at me but we didn't smile at each other” Praise the Lord. “You know why, because she was holding hands with someone who was not her husband.” Praise God. That is taking God's name in vain. God is not an exclamation point. You don't use him just to fill it in.

Folks when you do these four things, you are guilty of misusing God's name. So, we're not talking here about misusing the literal name of God. We're talking about disrespecting and dishonoring God because we involve him in something that will cast aspersion on his name. As Christians, we ought to be careful about what we say. People judge as by our words. They could either be dishonoring or honoring to God.

God says in the Bible those who honor me, I will honor. When you honor God's name that means you are using his name in a way that will make others notice that Jesus is your God and he is worthy. You see, as followers of Jesus, we carry the name of Jesus. We are representatives of Jesus and as such, we don't want to be a disgrace to him, do we?

That's why Paul reminds us in **Colossians 3:17**, "*Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all,*" what? "*in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" In short, keep Jesus in mind as you go about your daily life. Will this please Jesus? Is this honoring to Jesus? Am I like Jesus when I say this, when I do this? Will people see Jesus in me? Or will they turn away from Jesus?

Folks, the name of Jesus is the name above all names, Amen? And it behooves us to act in ways that will honor his name. So, **let me share with you how we can use his name honorably and properly.** There are a number of ways but for the sake of time, let me give you just two.

First, **be selective with your words.** Be selective with your words. What am I saying? Watch what you say, guard your mouth, control your tongue. Let us read this verse together. **Matthew 12:36 (CSB)**, "*I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak.*" Every careless word. I've said a few careless words in my lifetime. We will give an account of every careless word. I know some of us have a problem with the words we say. But you know what the real problem is? The problem is not the tongue, it's the heart. Look at this next verse. **"For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."** **Luke 6:45.** What comes out comes from the heart. It comes out of the heart. And it's just like the computer phrase, you know, garbage in garbage out. What comes in does come out inevitably. You see, there's no doubt about it it's hard to keep the language clean in today's society because your mind, your subconscious is constantly bombarded by profanity. Movies, books, video, magazines, friends at work, friends at school, even bumper stickers, and all of that stuff comes in and inevitably it's going to have a place to settle. And unintentionally it becomes a part of our vocabulary.

I remember years ago. I was working as a programmer in New Jersey. One day, my boss and I were working together to fix a problem in a program.

Every time we tested the program and it failed, he would blurt out either with the F word or the S word. I couldn't stop him, he's my boss, you know. We worked until midnight. Then I went home and slept. The next day I was at my desk by myself and tested the program again and when it failed, the first thing that came to my mind was the S word. I didn't say it but I thought it. I mean, that's how infectious profanity is when you're exposed to it for a while. I have no doubt that it would come out of my mouth if my boss and I spent another night working together.

So I have a real conviction about this. I mean that believers are too compromising when it comes to profanity. I think we sit and we put up with it on television, we put up with it on movies and we put up with it in videos. And I know the excuse, I hear people say all the time well you know, it just didn't bother me. I just don't let it bother me. Well, it bothers God. It bothers God so much that in Leviticus 24:16, he said it ought to be awarded the death penalty. *"Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord is to be put to death."* If you're a Christian, and you really take God seriously, there are going to be some movies you're going to avoid because of too much swearing. There are videos you will have to stop watching in the middle because they use the Lord's name in vain. God says you don't misuse my name. He says in 1 Samuel 2:30, *"Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained."* Be selective with your words.

Second. be steadfast in your walk. Be steadfast in your walk. In other words make sure that your lifestyle matches what you say you believe.

What am I saying? I'm saying make sure that your walk is consistent with your talk. Make sure what you profess comes out in your personality. Make sure what you do does not contradict what you say you believe. Listen to this verse. *2 Timothy 2:19, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."* King James version, *"...let every one that nameth the name of Christ*

depart from iniquity.” What's he saying? He's saying, “If I'm going to call myself a Christian I better act like it, because if I'm not, I'm taking the Lord's name in vain.”

You see, when I say I'm a believer, and I act in ways that contradict what I claim to be, I'm misusing God's name. Titus, look at what Titus says, *“They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.”* (Titus 1:16)

You know what's amazing to me, you could go out there on the street, stop 50 cars and ask the people in the car, are you a Christian? And most of them will say, “Yeah, sure, I'm a Christian.” But what is a Christian? It is somebody who believes and follows the Lord Jesus. There are people who claim to be Christians, call the name of Jesus and yet they don't know him and they have no desire to know him. That's a misuse of God's name. Jesus says, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

You know, the fact is, too often my lifestyle is inconsistent with my label. Too often, what I do is inconsistent with what I say, what I believe. Now that's probably true about you too. How do I use God's name honorably and properly? You be selective with your words and you watch what you have on your mind, because what comes in does come out. And you be steadfast in your walk, because too often we're just simply just lazy Christians.

Now, let's face the facts folks. The truth is we've all misused God's name would you agree with that? One way or the other we have all misused God's name. That's the bad news.

The good news is that God wants to forgive us and he wants to start over and he wants to wipe the slate clean and he says once you have not only a tongue cleansing, let's have a brain cleansing, a mind cleansing, a heart cleansing.

Let's start over. Look at Acts 4:12, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be*

saved.” That name is Jesus! There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Folks, there's one way to heaven. I didn't say that, Jesus said that. God said it. Jesus said, I am the way. He didn't say I'm one way, I'm a good way, I'm the best way, he said, I am the way. You're saying, isn't that kind of narrow? Yes. People say well, there are many roads that all lead to the same path as long as you're sincere. But you can be sincerely wrong. It's like you want to get to DC and you take the Metro but it actually goes to Reston. You know in your heart that it goes to DC. In your heart, you're sure. You're sincere about it. Obviously, no matter how sincere you are, you're not going to DC. Many people find a way to God, different ways, but Jesus said there's only one way.

Salvation is found in Christ. The Bible says, *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* (John 20:31) There is life in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus says, *“I came that you might have life.”* (John 10:10) You see, in taking the name of Jesus personally, you're living. You're existing. You may be in a rat race, in a dog-eats-dog society, but Jesus says there's life in my name.

Jesus' name is an invitation to life. That's what the next verse is all about. Romans 10:13, here's the invitation. *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* Now that is what's called a conditional promise. God says you do your part, I will do my part. God says I will save you if you will, what? Believe on my name, all on my name. And would God lie? No. He doesn't have any reason to lie. God says you do your part, I do my part.

There's a promise you will be saved. You say, Rolly, what are you trying to say this morning? I am trying to say this. The Ten Commandments were given not as restrictions, but really to liberate us. They were given to teach us how to live. That's why I call this “Living a Fulfilled Life”. You put God first in your life, you don't have any idols, you don't put anything before God.

The first four of these deal with our relationship to God. And then you take God seriously. That means he wants you to take him seriously. So, he says, if you honor me, I will honor you. If you do a Bible study on the name of God, on the name of Jesus, and there are lots and lots of verses about the name of God, you'll discover all the benefits and blessings of honoring the name of God. God promises prosperity, success and power and life and peace.

There is power in the name of Jesus. There is healing in his name and there are miracles in his name, there is purpose in his name. There is peace in his name. There is power in his name. There is life. But some of you say, but Rolly, I have a hard time with my mouth. The fact is some of you do have a habit maybe of swearing, and you say things and when you say it, you say, man I wish I hadn't said that and you picked it up and it was so easy. And maybe you picked it up from work or you picked it up at school, maybe you picked it up in the service. How do you break that bad habit? Well, first you admit it to God. You tell God you're sorry. You say Lord, I'm sorry, I confess. I have dishonored your name. I misused it. And you ask him to forgive you. And you accept his forgiveness. Then you commit the problem to God. And say Lord, I've got a problem. I've got a habit here I can't break. The book of James says, No man can tame the tongue by his own power. It says that if you can't get control of your tongue, that's a mark of immaturity. And so you ask God to give you the control. The fruit of the spirit is self-control. And then you begin to control what you allow in your mind. And you walk out of those situations where you have the opportunity to listen to that. You say I will not put up with somebody taking my Lord's name in vain. Don't be compromising. Don't say well, it doesn't bother me, because it does bother God. And then you go and practice his presence, minute, by minute. You see, the Bible says when you become a Christian, Christ comes into your life. That means he's with you. Do you want to use his name in his presence like that? No.

The more you become aware it, Jesus Christ is with you every moment, the less you'll be likely to shoot off your mouth.

Let's bow our heads. God loves you so much and he has a plan for your life and he wants to work in your life, but he says I want you to take me seriously. It's not a game. It's not funny when people use our Lord's name in vain. Jesus died on the cross for you. He doesn't want his name being used as an exclamation point or as a filler in a conversation. He doesn't want it used to insult or to intimidate. He doesn't want us to use it as a spiritual badge to impress other people of how many times we can say praise the Lord and thank you Jesus. He doesn't want us to use his name impulsively or as an excuse or as a blame. If you pray in your heart right now, would you say dear God, would you help me to be sincere when I worship? Say Lord, help me to focus on you, not to give you have lip service, but really concentrate on you and your word. And would you say Lord, help me to be selective with my words. Help me to watch my mouth, guard what I say. Lord, help me to limit the things that I allow to come into my mind. And would you say Lord, help me to be consistent in my daily living, be steadfast in my walk. Lord, I pray that my lifestyle will match my label. Help me to do what I say I believe. Now, if you've never met Jesus Christ, I invite you to meet him this morning. I'm not talking about a religion, I'm not talking about going to church. I'm talking about a relationship and every person here can have that relationship regardless of your background whether you're Catholic, Protestant or Jewish, or Buddhist, or Hindu or Mormon or whatever.

The important thing is to get a relationship with God's son, Jesus the Christ the son of God and by believing on him you may have life ever after. Would you say Jesus Christ, I want to get to know you. Say, I don't understand all, but I want to be a believer, I want to have the life you offer me. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You say, "Lord, I want to call on your name today and I want to give my life to you. Help me to understand all of this." If you pray that in your heart, God heard you.