



## Are WE Taking God's Name in Vain?

**Exodus 20:7:** (NKJV) "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."

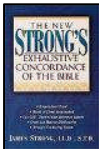
In general conversation, we often hear people use the name of Jesus and the name of God in very inappropriate ways. The sad thing is that it is so common we may sometimes not even notice it, or we may dismiss it without a second thought. Are these phrases disrespectful? Yes. Are they unfortunate? Yes. The question is - is this what is meant by taking the Lord's name in vain or is there more to it? Is taking the Lord's name in vain an obvious thing, or is it something that can happen in much more subtle ways? Is it possible for those of us who claim to take the name of God seriously to actually take His name in vain? Stay with us as we seek clarity in understanding just what is meant by this commandment to not take His name in vain.

### Questions for consideration:

1. What is the name of the "LORD your God"?
2. What does it mean to "take" His name in "vain"?
3. How might we fall into taking His name in vain?

#### 1. What is the name of the "LORD your God"?

**Exodus 20:7:** (NKJV) "You shall not take the name of the LORD <3068> your God <430> in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."



**LORD:** Strong's #3068 Jehovah (yeh-ho-vaw'); (the) Self-Existent or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God:

**God:** Strong's #430 'elohiym (el-o-heem'); gods in the ordinary sense; but specifically used of the supreme God; occasionally applied by way of deference to magistrates (rulers)

**Deuteronomy 6:4-5:** (ASV) "Hear, O Israel: **Jehovah <3068>** our **God <430>** is one **Jehovah <3068>**:<sup>5</sup> and thou shalt love **Jehovah <3068>** thy **God <430>** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

**Malachi 3:6:** (ASV) "For I, **Jehovah <3068>**, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

The Self-Existent One (God needs nothing externally in order to exist) does not change, which is very comforting.

As we begin to develop this understanding of God's name, it will become clear that the name represents the character.

*(Source: McClintock & Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature)*

**"Jehovah," Proper Signification of the Term.** — A clue to the real import of this name appears to be designedly furnished in the passage where it is most distinctively ascribed to the God of the Hebrews. **Exodus 3:14:** "And God said to Moses, I shall be what I shall be; and he said, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, The I SHALL BE has sent me to you."



God's name is mighty and sacred.

**The loftiness of God:**

Isaiah 55:8-11: (ASV) *"<sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith **Jehovah <3068>**. <sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup>For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."*

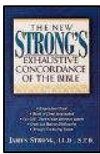
In Biblical times, the name (or renaming) of something held great meaning. This Isaiah scripture describes to us that God is approachable if we look up.

Psalms 102:24-27: (KJV) *"<sup>24</sup>I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. <sup>25</sup>Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. <sup>26</sup>They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: <sup>27</sup>But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."*

There is a difference between the unchangeable Creator and the created. This is the God we must utterly respect.

**The sacredness of His name:**

Matthew 6:9: (KJV) *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, **Hallowed <37>** be thy name."*



**Hallow:** Strong's #37 hagiazo (hag-ee-ad'-zo); to make holy, i.e. (ceremonially) purify or consecrate; (mentally) to venerate: (holding sacred with honor and respect)

1 Peter 3:15: (KJV) *"But **sanctify <37>** the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"*

*Hallowed be the Name of God;*

**"Hollow"** be the name of the gods of this world!

**"Sanctify"**  
(setting apart for a holy purpose)  
here is the same word as "hallow."

Vanity gets in the way of hallowing God's name, because you hallow "self" instead.

**The worthiness of God:**

Mark 12:28-34: (ASV) *"<sup>28</sup>And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: <sup>30</sup>and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. <sup>31</sup>The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. <sup>32</sup>And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he: <sup>33</sup>and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."*



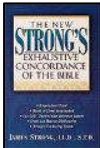
<sup>34</sup>And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question."

Jesus answered the question in a bigger way than the questioner asked by quoting the Old Testament. We venerate God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

## 2. What does it mean to "take" His name in "vain"?

(Source: Bible Commentator *Matthew Henry*) "The third commandment concerns the manner of worship, that it be with all possible reverence and seriousness. All false oaths are forbidden. All light appealing to God, all profane cursing, is a horrid breach of this command. It matters not whether the word of God, or sacred things, all such-like things break this commandment, and there is no profit, honour, or pleasure in them. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Whenever we mention the name of God, it should be done in an utterly respectful manner.



**Take:** Strong's #5375 nasa' (naw-saw'); or nacah to lift, in a great variety of applications to life up, to take, to carry, bare up, etc.

As we look at a few examples of this word, notice the intention behind the meaning:

**Genesis 7:17:** "And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and **bare up <5375>** the ark, and it was lift up above the earth."

**Exodus 6:8:** "And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did **swear <5375>** to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD."

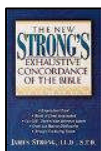
This gives us a sense of carrying; a sense of intention.

**Psalms 24:1-10:** (NKJV) "<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. <sup>2</sup>For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.

<sup>3</sup>Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? <sup>4</sup>He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not **lifted <5375>** up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. <sup>5</sup>He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. <sup>6</sup>This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah <sup>7</sup>**Lift <5375>** up your heads, O you gates! And be **lifted <5375>** up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. <sup>8</sup>Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. <sup>9</sup>**Lift <5375>** up your heads, O you gates! **Lift <5375>** up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. <sup>10</sup>Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah"



This compares the individual who has not lifted up his soul to an idol. What do we hold sacred? To "take" seems to mean to carry something with intention as opposed to carrying something without thought.



**Vain:** Strong's #7723 shav' (shawv); or shav (shav); desolating; evil (as destructive), literally (ruin) or morally (especially guile); figuratively idolatry (as false, subjective), uselessness

Lexicon: 1) emptiness, vanity, falsehood 1a) emptiness, nothingness, vanity 1b) emptiness of speech, lying 1c) worthlessness (of conduct)



## Some Old Testament examples of the use of "vain:"

Exodus 23:1: (KJV) "Thou shalt not **raise <5375>** a **false <7723>** report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness."

Deuteronomy 5:20: "Neither shalt thou bear **false <7723>** witness against thy neighbour."

Taking God's name in vain is to hold it in a false way, without meaning.

Psalms 127:1: "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in **vain <7723>** that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in **vain <7723>**."

Jonah 2:1-9: (KJV) "<sup>1</sup>Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, <sup>2</sup>And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. <sup>3</sup>For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. <sup>4</sup>Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. <sup>5</sup>The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. <sup>6</sup>I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. <sup>7</sup>When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. <sup>8</sup>They that observe lying **vanities <7723>** forsake their own mercy. <sup>9</sup>But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

Jonah followed what he wanted to do and now he is stuck as a result of his own actions. He was focusing on his own vanity and he did not hold up the name of God. He asked for forgiveness. This gives us a sense of the importance of holding God's name in sacredness and not in vain. Vain seems to be an incorrect application of something that brings you to wasted time and effort.

To combine the meaning of both words in our theme text:

Exodus 20:7: (NKJV) "You shall not take the name of the **LORD <3068>** your **God <430>** in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

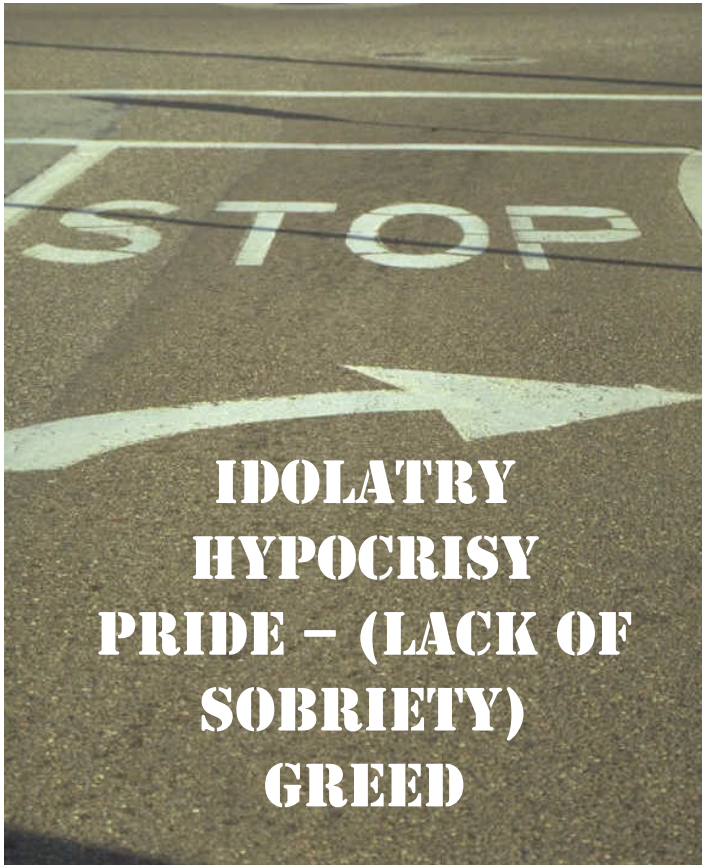
You go about intentionally carrying and using the name of God, but you apply that sacred name in grossly inappropriate ways, which brings you nothing but guilt before God. If we claim to be a Christian, do our actions reflect carrying God's name with sacredness or do they reflect carrying God's name in vain? We are commissioned to carry the name and will of God. Don't carry it thoughtlessly, being careless about it.

### 3. How might WE fall into taking His name in vain?

God knows what's in our hearts and sees all of our actions. For us to say we are one thing but do another thing, if what we are doing is not God-honoring, we are taking His name in vain. It is difficult because it requires each of us to look in the mirror and say, "Am I falling into the disobedience of this commandment?"



Here are some ways we may take God's name in vain, other than simply with words:



## IDOLATRY

Idolatry is putting the created before the Creator. Our view of life becomes distorted.

Isaiah 42:8: "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

2 Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

The word for "unbeliever" in this Scripture is the same as idolatry. It doesn't have to be an actual image - it can be a mental image. The moment we idolize the created over the Creator, we run into trouble. This is an example of taking God's name in vain by our actions.

## HYPOCRISY

Matthew 6:1-9: (KJV) "<sup>1</sup>Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. <sup>2</sup>Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: <sup>4</sup>That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. <sup>5</sup>And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. <sup>6</sup>But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. <sup>7</sup>But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. <sup>8</sup>Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. <sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

Jesus teaches us how to carry God's name with sacredness and not in a thoughtless manner.

1. Do we make sure that everybody can see what we are giving?
2. Are we praying on the street corner so everyone can see how pious we are? Are we lifting up God's name or our own?



3. Are our prayers full of vain repetition? Are they flowery for the sake of an audience? Are they merely based on our own emotion, our own situation - only about me, me, me?

Mark 7:5-8: (KJV) *"<sup>5</sup>Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? <sup>6</sup>He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. <sup>7</sup>Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. <sup>8</sup>For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."*

The Pharisees taught traditions but not sacredness. Is our Christian belief based on what is convenient? Do we walk through the Doctrinal Buffet Line and "load up" on only those things most appealing?

## **PRIDE – (LACK OF SOBRIETY)**

Mark 10:17-25: (KJV) *"<sup>17</sup>And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? <sup>18</sup>And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. <sup>19</sup>Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. <sup>20</sup>And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. <sup>21</sup>Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. <sup>22</sup>And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. <sup>23</sup>And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! <sup>24</sup>And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*

This is a great example of pride getting in the way. This man put wealth above God, and it was not a price he was willing to pay.

**Is what we have the source of our truest personal value?**

Matthew 18:4: (KJV) *"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

Matthew 23:12: (KJV) *"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."*

It says we have to "humble ourselves." Experiences can humble us, but we must humble ourselves - one could even start to brag about one's own difficult experiences!

Humility **MUST** be important - both James and Peter quote the same text:

James 4:6-10: (NKJV) *"<sup>6</sup>But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup>Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."*



**1 Peter 5:5-9:** (NKJV) *"<sup>5</sup>Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."<sup>6</sup>Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, <sup>7</sup>casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. <sup>8</sup>Be sober, be vigilant; <sup>9</sup>because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."*

## GREED

Do we honor God, yet secretly want the honor for ourselves?

**Lucifer wanted what was out of his reach.**

**Isaiah 14:12-15:** (KJV) *"<sup>12</sup>How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! <sup>13</sup>For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: <sup>14</sup>I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. <sup>15</sup>Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."*

**Do we hold back our sacrifice for the sake of self-preservation?**

**Acts 5:1-11:** (NIV) *"<sup>1</sup>Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. <sup>2</sup>With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup>Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? <sup>4</sup>Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."<sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. <sup>6</sup>Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. <sup>7</sup>About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. <sup>8</sup>Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."<sup>9</sup>Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."<sup>10</sup>At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. <sup>11</sup>Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events."*

**1 Timothy 6:1-10:** (NKJV) *"<sup>1</sup>Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. <sup>2</sup>And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things. <sup>3</sup>If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup>he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup>useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. <sup>6</sup>Now godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup>For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. <sup>8</sup>And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. <sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*



We want to focus on words that lift up and are based on the Bible. Are we focusing on the convenient parts of Christianity rather than the sacrificial parts - doing what God would have you to do, even if it is at a personal cost? When something of difficulty is required of us, do we rationalize it down or do we pay that which we ought to pay in terms of the experience?

### Why are we Christian??

Philippians 4:10-13: (KJV) *"<sup>11</sup>Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. <sup>12</sup>I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

### Finally, what about our words:

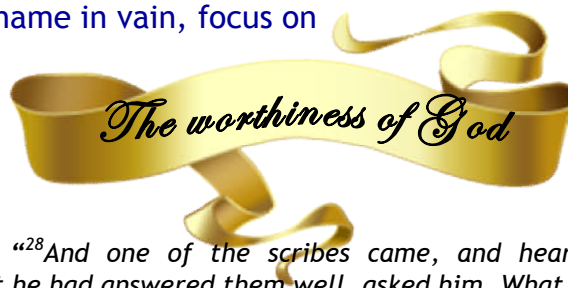
James 3:3-5: (ASV) *"<sup>3</sup>Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. <sup>4</sup>Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth. <sup>5</sup>So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!"*

We need to filter what we think and say. Our words are a representation of what is in our hearts.

Matthew 12:33-37: (ASV) *"<sup>33</sup>Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. <sup>34</sup>Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. <sup>35</sup>The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. <sup>36</sup>And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. <sup>37</sup>For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."*

We have the choice as to how we react to a circumstance. We can learn from the past and analyze why our conscience allowed the reaction to come through.

To avoid taking God's name in vain, focus on



Mark 12:28-34: (ASV) *"<sup>28</sup>And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: <sup>30</sup>and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. <sup>31</sup>The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."*

Focus on this and the idolatry of vanity that gets in the way will get put aside. Realize it and replace it.





**Psalms 63:1-4: (NKJV)** *"<sup>1</sup>O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. <sup>2</sup>So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. <sup>3</sup>Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. <sup>4</sup>Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name."*

This is a Scripture of perspective, showing us where we need to be in our thoughts, hearts, minds and conscience. When God is at the "top of our list," we can focus on holding God's name with sacredness and honor on a day-by-day basis.

*So are WE taking God's name in vain?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*

