

# The 10 Commandments

## Session #4:

# Misrepresentation

### OVERVIEW

Sunday Message Series: The 10 Commandments: Set Free to Live Free, Love God, Love Others

Resource: *The Ten Commandments: Living God's Way* by Mary Evans (CWR 2011)

Homework: Participants are asked to read the Scripture passages ahead of time in order to allow the Holy Spirit to inspire the understanding of their meaning.

Items needed for this session: Handouts of Session #4

A way to show the videos (laptop, screen, etc.)

### LOVE: ENGAGE GOD AND OTHERS (10 minutes)

#### WELCOME

Prayer: Host prays asking for the Holy Spirit to lead the session, to inspire the understanding of the Scripture read, and to help participants apply the session to their daily discipleship.

Say the week's memory verse together.

Grow Group Series: 9 Sessions to this Grow Group cycle. Originally planned to finish by May 24.

Review: Group Covenant. Participants agree to love each other by

- Attending as many of the nine sessions as possible
- Participating in a service project
- Making room for everyone to share: be okay with silence and resist over responding
- Creating a safe space where people can be heard and feel loved: no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes
- Keeping anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
- Avoiding gossip and immediately resolving any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15-17
- Giving group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God
- Inviting friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers
- Getting to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly.

#### ICE BREAKER.

Call to mind some TV, magazine or online commercials or ads. Imagine if the name of the product or brand were deleted. Without the name or product, notice what is being shared, implied, or used to make their point. Is it always possible to guess the product from the advertisement? Share some examples that come to mind.

### SERVE: ENGAGE THE WIDER COMMUNITY (10 minutes)

**SERVICE PROJECT** (*see separate sheet*)

If the group has not yet made plans, decide on a service project idea and date.

## **GROW: ENGAGE GOD’S WORD (50 minutes)**

### **INTRODUCTION** (*By volunteer reader.*)

This session considers offensive speech and behaviors, and then push into the ways in which we can speak positively of God. Many Christians find it difficult to provide specific examples where they have shared specific positive references to or comments about God when speaking with others. We Christians need to have confidence in God to do it!

People often share how the behaviors of professed Christians actually turn them off from God. On the other hand, most people who become Christians also speak of how the behaviors of professed Christians have turned them on to God. The Christian teaching of Jesus dying on the cross, however, is offensive to many (1 Cor. 1:18-25). Sometimes trite clichés, such as “God made it happen,” or “God has a reason,” or “The Lord told me . . .” really sour people against giving Jesus a try.

Today we look at how we use God’s name. But this is so much more than speaking God’s name with our mouths. It actually includes how we live our whole lives as an example of someone who claims to follow Jesus. We speak God’s name in everything we do!

### **CONTEXT:**

**Video:** That Christian Vlogger, Justin, “Using God's Name in Vain!”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LABk2WmphnE> (6:07 minutes)

**Discuss:** Justin said Christians “walking the walk, not just talk the talk.” Discuss how using God’s name in vain includes your behavior as well.

### **OPENING OUR EYES**

Read: Exodus 20:1-7

Read: Ezekiel 36:16-32

*Volunteer reader:*

Over the last couple of nights watching TV in Australia (including UK and US programs) I [Mary Evans] have heard God’s name used many times both in dramas and on life TV, by adults and children. Sometimes used negatively, expressing violence or fear or bad feelings about people, sometimes positively to express wonder or joy. But, excluding filming in Christian services, only once, when a little girl progressing to the next stage of a cooking competition looked up and said, “Thank you, God,” was there any sign of the speakers having any idea what they were saying or of whom they were speaking. Almost always, there would have been no thought of giving offence. The name of Almighty God has become a mild form of meaningless swearing. Should we be offended that God’s name has been misused or, as some Bible translations put it, “in vain” (i.e. emptied of meaning) in this way? I think we should! It is clear that the “name of the LORD,” the “name of Yahweh” is used synonymously with Yahweh Himself. Calling on or praising the name of the Lord is calling on or praising the Lord. To use God’s name thoughtlessly suggests that God is of no account: this insults God and should be seen as insulting by God’s people. Because this has become so common in modern language, Christians must be particularly careful not to use God’s name in such a way.

Growing up in a Christian family I used to think that this was an easy commandment to keep. I was not used to hearing swearing, and it would never have entered my head to use God’s name as part of thoughtless conversation. It just wasn’t a temptation, so I could tick that one off easily. However, I have realized that actually this is one of the easiest

commandments to break. This is not because hearing God's name misused so often influences us but because that casual usage, though offensive, is actually not the worst offence. Ezekiel 36 makes it very clear that God's name is profaned when God's people misrepresent Him. Israel were the people of Yahweh. Surrounding nations were supposed to learn something of who Yahweh was by observing His people. When Israel tolerated injustice or practiced idolatry, they were saying to the nations: "God doesn't care about this," when He most certainly did. To profane God's name was to proclaim, by action as well as by word, untruths about the God whose name they bore. And God really cares that people know who He is. One of the key reasons God called Israel to be His own people was so that they could represent Him. Ezekiel tells us that a prime reason for the exile was that God wanted the nations to be sure that He was not the kind of God who tolerated Israel's behavior. However that might lead outsiders to think that Israel's God was not powerful, so one of the main reasons for their redemption was also that outsiders would understand that God is powerful in and over all nations.

Every Christians bears Christ's name and people look at us, what we do more than what we say, and draw conclusions about what Christ is like. Every time we behave in a way that dishonors or displeases Jesus, we are misrepresenting Him to our neighbors, therefore misusing His name. Not swearing is good, but the only way to keep this commandment is to reflect Jesus in all that we do.

#### **INTO THE BIBLE**

Read Deuteronomy 32:1-4

Read Proverbs 18:10

Read Philippians 2:9-11

Discuss the following as time allows:

1. How does it make you feel if you hear God's name misused? Does it really matter if the people involved don't mean to be offensive?
2. Why do you think the use of the name of God or of Jesus as a thoughtless exclamation has become so common? Can you think of any ways that Christians could use this as a means of bringing their own knowledge of God into the conversation without sounding judgmental about the speaker?
3. Is it true that if Christians used God's name in a good way more often, then others would misuse His name less? Explain your thoughts.
4. Most common exclamations seem to be either blasphemous or making unpleasant reference to bodily functions. These are all clearly unacceptable. Are there alternative acceptable exclamations (when, for example, you drop a hammer on your foot) or should Christians always restrict themselves to a simple, "Ow!"?
5. Talk about situations where you have known people to get the wrong impression of God because of the way Christians behave.
6. Make #5 above personal. Is there anything relating to my behavior over the last week that might have given people the wrong impression about Jesus? Could the way in which my church functions or interacts give people the wrong impression about Jesus? Do I recognize my part in that, or is it always someone else's fault?

7. As a group (or on your own) write out a prayer that you could use now asking God to help you to avoid misusing His name. You may like to make a commitment to pray this prayer for each other during the coming week.
8. Do you think that if the first three commandments were properly kept then the rest would all actually be included within that?

### SEEING JESUS IN THE SCRIPTURES

*Volunteer reader:* There is only one human being who has ever spent His whole life representing—as well as reflecting—God properly. That is Jesus. He shows us by His example what it means to live in the way God intended. It is comforting to know that He is also the One who provides the means for us to do so, not only by taking our sin and giving us His righteousness, but by asking the Father to send us His Spirit. John 14:15-17 says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will send another Companion, who will be with you forever. This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can’t receive because it neither sees Him nor recognizes Him. You know Him, because He lives with you and will be with you.” (CEB)

### PERSONAL APPLICATION:

*Volunteer reader:* The huge challenge each one of us faces is this: to avoid misusing God’s name by claiming that we belong to Him and yet behaving in a way that dishonors or misrepresents Him. We may be able to avoid using the name of God thoughtlessly in speech, but can we avoid dishonoring God in our actions? We certainly need His help here. It means constantly asking myself whether, if I am taking a particular course of actions, anyone looking on would be right in assuming that God must approve of it! Maybe each time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we should remember that God’s name is “hallowed,” or considered holy, when His will is done on earth—by me!—as it is in heaven.

Discuss: How will you apply what you learned in this lesson to your life this next week?

### LOVE: ENGAGE GOD (5 minutes)

#### LOOKING AHEAD:

Invite someone new to come next week! I will invite:

Do we need to call/text/email and remind one another? I will remind:

Homework:

Read Exodus 20:1-12 (If you wish, you can also read ahead next week’s passages: Deuteronomy 5:12-16, Nehemiah 13:15-22, Mark 2:27-3:6, Genesis 2:23-24, and Matthew 15:1-9.)

#### CLOSING PRAYER:

Say the Lord’s Prayer out loud together, using this modified version:

**Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed, holy, sacred, consecrated, be your Name.**

**Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**