

## ***God's Name -- Handle With Care***

How often do you use terms like "My God," "O God," "Dear Lord," or "Lordy" as mere slang expressions? Do you have no reverence for God and His name? Do you not fear Him? Can you trample God's name under foot and still go guiltless before Him?

Whose name are you taking in vain? It is the Creator of the universe; it is the giver of all good things; it is the One who "gave His only begotten Son;" it is the One to whom you want to turn when accident or serious illness or grief strikes within your family; it is the One before whom you must stand in judgment when all earthly life is ended. Can you stand guiltless before Him in judgment when all of your life you have profaned His name? Can you show contempt for His name throughout life and still expect Him to hear in your moments of crisis?

Even if you do not reverence God, do you not respect the feelings of those who do? There are people in your community who have a strong faith in God; who praise Him for His mercy and kindness; who even see His hand working through their sorrows and tragedies to bring them closer to Him; who truly love God. We are not speaking of hypocrites whose religion is only an outward show. We are speaking of genuine people who truly reverence God. These people do business with you; they shop where you shop; they attend community meetings which you attend. No, they don't correct you every time you use God's name irreverently, for they are concerned for your feelings; but they are deeply hurt every time they hear the name of their God used so carelessly. Do you not care? Should you not be equally concerned for their feelings?

Now, the fact that you are still reading this article indicates that you do care; otherwise, you would have already thrown this paper away. Your actions are due to thoughtlessness, not maliciousness. Or perhaps no-one has ever pointed out to you the seriousness of taking God's name in vain. It might not be easy to change. Habit can maintain a terrible grip on our lives. But with effort you can succeed. Of course, I would encourage you to go beyond this. I would encourage you to develop love, reverence, and respect for God that would not only regard His name as sacred, but would bring you humbly to His word and will, and to salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. If you do thus submit yourself to God, you will find joy in using His name in prayer and in praise. You will sing of His name and bring honor to His name through your godly life. Isn't this far better than blaspheming His name?

What does the Bible say of God's name? "Holy and reverend is His name" (Psalm 111:9). "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth" (Psalm 8:1)! It's God's name. Handle it with care.

***- by Bill Hall***

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## ***Get Out Of Your Circle***

Greetings and salutations were a standard part of Christianity in the first-century church. It is still seen centuries later as an avenue of good will - a universal way of showing friendliness or expressing best wishes.

"Hello" or "How are you" are common greetings today that open up conversations; that provide opportunities to question people, express feelings, develop acquaintances, or find out needs; that let people know we are interested in them. Among brethren the ultimate goal is to create a bond of affection among all - from the richest to the poorest, the youngest to the oldest, males to the females, and the noblest to the commonest.

All of this brings me to the point of this writing. Brethren, "get out of your circle!" It is so easy before and immediately after services to drift or slide into comfortable relationships and spend all our time visiting and bonding with people we already know, appreciate, and love dearly. It is a prevalent practice everywhere I've had opportunity to visit.

I see, for example, the same old groups visiting together at every service. I see the young folks congregate at the same location in the auditorium; I see older couples standing around together as though they had an appointed place; and I see certain families at their same spots week after week.

Now you understand, of course, that nothing is wrong with this. We all need those close, intimate friends with whom we can relax, laugh, and exchange pleasantries. But, my point here is that we have plenty of time to do this after lesser known brethren are gone. Get around to

brethren who are less involved, who will be gone within a few minutes, who do not feel a connection, who are gone so soon because they feel no bond among us.

Now I also understand that with some this is not possible. Many are gone before you could possibly get around to them. But there are still a good many brethren who are there but have no strong sense of belonging. Make it your goal to get around to as many as you can in the short time they are there. When you have done that, then return to your "circles." The greater number of brethren who can make less involved brethren feel welcome, feel attachment to the body, feel a sense of belonging, feel a bond of love - the greater becomes our oneness and their encouragement to serve the Lord faithfully.

Greeting one another is a great work and an important act of usefulness. Show yourself friendly!

**- by L. A. Stauffer**

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### ***"Ditch-digging Work"***

I was talking to a preacher about his work in a small, struggling congregation. There had been plenty of 'ups and downs'. I've admired his work there for some time and told him so. His response impressed me. He said, "it's ditch-digging work." By that he meant his work was not flashy or spectacular. There wasn't any glamour or personal glory to be gained. He wouldn't develop a big reputation from what he was doing. It was just plain, simple, hard work that needed to be done. Thank God that there are men like him that are willing to do such "ditch-digging."

We need the spirit that this godly servant expressed. We need to remember that "he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:11,12).

There's way too much striving for personal glory in God's kingdom. We see far too many folks - preachers and others - who are more concerned about how they "look" in the eyes of others than they are about what they are really doing in productive work for the glory of God. The Pharisees were of this mind-set. Jesus said that "all their works they do for to be seen of men" (Matthew 23:5). Sadly, they have many modern day counterparts.

Paul urged us to "let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3). Let's work hard to develop a servant's heart. What needs to be done? Is it some "ditch-digging"? If so, then roll up your sleeves and get to work! Remember, "your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

**- by Greg Gwin**