

Words and Phrases We Should Not Say

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Preface

“But I say to you that for every idle [careless, ESV] word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37).

Our words will either justify us or condemn us. As result, let’s consider words and phrases that Christians should not say.

God's Name in Vain

God has always been serious about His name.

- *“But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt” (Ezek. 20:9, NASB).*
- *“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain” (Exod. 20:7, NASB).*

God's Name in Vain

We can use God's name in vain in a way we may not realize . . .

- *“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).*
- *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:21-23).*

Do our actions truly say, “Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name” (Matt. 6:9)?

“I Swear”

*“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, **do not swear at all**: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matt. 5:33-37).*

- The New Covenant is more strict than the Old – **“Do not swear AT ALL.”**
- This point of no swearing whatsoever is reiterated in **James 5:12**: *“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.”*

“I’ll Forgive You, But I Won’t Forget . . .”

- When someone wrongs us and they seek our forgiveness, we should imitate God (**Eph. 5:1**), who says:
 - *“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more”* (**Heb. 10:17**).
 - *“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”* (**Heb. 8:12**).
- When someone wrongs us, they should have confidence that we will not allow their former deeds to cloud our perception of them. After all, our salvation depends on our willingness to forgive others.
 - *“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (**Matt. 6:14-15, ESV**).

“I’ll Forgive You, But I Won’t Forget . . .”

- James concludes, *“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy”* (**James 2:13a**).
- Being willing to forgive people when they wrong us is truly one of the most difficult things God commands us to do. But if a person is willing to repent of their wrongdoing, we are required to forgive them.
 - *“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him”* (**Luke 17:3**).
- If we are not willing to forgive one who is penitent, we are unable to have fellowship with God and receive forgiveness from Him.

Vain Repetitions

*"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. **And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words**" (Matt. 6:5-7).*

How can we avoid vain repetitions?

Vain Repetitions

Repetitious prayers do not necessarily mean they automatically qualify as vain repetitions.

- For example, Paul, asked God to remove his thorn in the flesh three times (**2 Cor. 12:8**); these certainly were not vain repetitions.
- Similarly, Jesus prayed three times that the cup pass from Him (**Matt. 26:36-44**), and we all recognize the sincerity of our Lord's prayers in the garden.

Vain Repetitions

- The Oxford Languages Dictionary defines "vain" as the following: (1) **"Having or showing an excessively high opinion of one's appearance, abilities, or worth."** This is definitely under consideration in Matt. 6:5-7, but also consider a second definition. (2) **"Producing no result; useless."**
- Consider how the ESV translates **Matt. 6:7**: *"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words."*
 - Thus, vain repetitions are not genuinely and sincerely asking God for the same things everyday. Instead, vain repetitions are *"empty phrases"* producing no results on our part.

Vain Repetitions

We can be guilty of offering God empty phrases (vain repetitions) by . . .

- i. Repeatedly asking God to forgive us of sins when we make no effort to turn from them.
 - *“Repent therefore and be converted [turn again, ESV], that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19a).*
 - *“Bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt. 3:8).*

If we sin, ask God to forgive us, then go right back to sinning, we offer God vain repetitions because our plea for forgiveness has - as the definition says - produced no results.

Vain Repetitions

We can be guilty of offering God empty phrases (vain repetitions) by . . .

- ii. Asking God for wisdom without spending any time studying for God to provide us that wisdom.
 - **Ask** – *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:5-6).*
 - **Receive** – *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).*

Vain Repetitions

We can be guilty of offering God empty phrases (vain repetitions) by . . .

- iii. Repeatedly asking God to help others during their times of weakness, but we are not willing to help support those people ourselves.
- **Be aware of others' needs** – *“We do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life . . . you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many” (2 Cor. 1:8-11).*
- **But not just aware** – *“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).*

“ . . . ”

Silence can be a godly characteristic. It can display:

- i. Our willingness to serve others in love (**Job 2:11-13**).
- ii. Careful evaluation of instruction (**1 Cor. 14:29-31**).
- iii. Subjection (**1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12**).
- iv. Wisdom & patience (**Job 2:13, 13:5; Ecc. 5:2-3; James 4:19-20**).

However, silence can also be an ungodly characteristic. It can display:

- i. Unwillingness to speak out against sin (**Gal. 2:11-14**).
- ii. Neglect in warning others about the wrath of God (**2 Cor. 5:11a; Col. 1:28-29**).
- iii. A lack of teaching the "most needed" parts of Truth (**2 Tim. 4:3**).
- iv. Neglect in trying to reach erring brothers and sisters (**James 5:19-20**).

Silence is golden . . . unless it isn't.

Anything Hypocritical

Jesus repeatedly condemned hypocrisy during his earthly ministry. Consider an example:

- *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt. 23:25-28).*

Our outward appearance needs to match our inward character.

Anything Hypocritical

Our outward appearance needs to match our inward character.

- We should not praise God on Sunday and curse man on Monday.
- We should not sing “*Have Thy Own Way Lord*” on Sunday morning, but then allow the world to have its way with us throughout the week.
 - “*No man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:8-10).*

The cause of Christ has been greatly damaged for centuries by hypocrites.

Let us never be included in such a number.

“It’s Too Late for Me”

Have you known someone who refused to become a Christian or refused to remain faithful because it was “**too late**” for God to save him?

Paul Completely Disproves this Theory:

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Tim. 1:15-16, KJV).

- Paul once worked in opposition to Christ, yet it was not “too late” for him. If you will but simply come to God, He will welcome you home. It’s not too late!