

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF GOD"

Big Idea: True transformational power is not found in using Jesus' name in a detached, magical fashion. It is found only through true faith in the person and work of Jesus.

For individual study or discussion

There is more than one story in the autobiographies of 18th and 19th century Christians in which the writer describes the pain of finding him or herself in the company of people who frequently utter God's name "in vain." Often the writer is on a long sea voyage in a small ship where it is impossible to avoid hearing the abuse of God's name over and over again. These stories invariably feature the writer pleading with the ship's company to stop using the name of the almighty God to express emotions or emphatically punctuate ideas. Sometimes, we're told, the ship's company listened and agreed to change. Often they did not.

We hear the name of God used all the time today, sometimes reverently, sometimes in the most egregious ways possible. What should our response be? And how does hearing God's name as profanity over and over again influence us, sometimes without our even being aware of it?

- 1) The way that the seven sons of Sceva used Jesus' name isn't something we're likely to witness today.
 - Are there ways, however, in which we try to use Jesus' name to advantage ourselves? Explain your answer.
 - Is there real power in Jesus' name? If yes, what kind of power? See Acts 3:1-8 and Acts 16:16-18. Is there power in Jesus' name today?
 - What does it mean when we pray "in Jesus' name"?
 - In Acts 19:17, we're told that following this incident, the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus were "seized with fear," and the name of Jesus "was held in high honor." What could this incident have revealed to them about God?
- 2) The burning of sorcery scrolls (see Acts 19:19) clearly revealed that the new Ephesian Christians were not only convicted but greatly changed by their belief in Jesus.
 - In what ways are Christians different in our culture today?
 - In what ways are Christians *perceived* to be different in our country and culture? Are these ways aiding or harming the spread of the Gospel? (See Acts 19:20)
 - Should there be ways in which Christians talk and live in radically different ways than those who don't believe in Christ? See Romans 12:2, James 2:14-24, Matthew 6:24, and Philippians 4:8-9.
 - What do we struggle to let go in order to follow Jesus?

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SPEAKER: Brian, Chad

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 19:13-22

Family Dinner Table

To put it mildly, the seven sons of Sceva got into big trouble when they tried to use Jesus' name like a magic spell (see Acts 19:13-16). They soon found out that not only the Lord Jesus, but Jesus' very name, is deserving of the highest honor. He is holy; his name is holy. They could not manipulate the name of Jesus to get whatever they wanted.

You've probably never heard or seen someone try to use the name of Jesus to cast out an evil spirit the way the sons of Sceva did in Ephesus. But are there other ways that we use Jesus' name as though it is magic? Many people end every prayer with "in Jesus' name. Amen." If the person praying that prayer is not in a relationship with Jesus—if the person praying that prayer is making no effort to please and obey him—what are they doing (or trying to do) when they pray "in Jesus' name"?

One more idea worth discussing: is it OK to use God's name in order to express an emotion (people use it to express anger and disgust but also excitement)? What about some of the most frequently typed letters in text messages: "OMG"? Should Christians text that to people or not?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Amani Ya Juu Chattanooga

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Keith and Ruth Powlison serving with MTW in Peru