

By Jessica Larsen
(Based on a true story)

This story happened in the USA.

It started with four square. Four square was a game some kids played outside the school at break time. Four players stood in a square and bounced a ball to each other. If they missed the ball, they had to leave the game.

I was nervous the first time I played. But I was pretty good at it. It was fun!

Then the girl across from me missed the ball. She said Heavenly Father's name and laughed. "Good shot, Gwen," she said. "Guess I'm out!"

I held the ball tightly. She had just taken the Lord's name in vain! That was like swearing.

But no one else seemed to think it was bad. They all laughed, like it was funny or cool.

We kept playing. Then it happened again. Someone missed the ball and said Heavenly Father's name like a swear word.

A few minutes later, I missed the ball too. And just like the others, I took the Lord's name in vain. Kids laughed and high-fived me as I got back in line to play again.

After that, I played four square every day . . . and I said the Lord's name more and more.

One day my friend Abby joined the game. She passed the ball to me. I missed it and said Heavenly Father's name.

Abby blinked in surprise. "You never used to say that."

She was right. At home and in Primary, I learned that the Lord's name was special and we shouldn't use it to swear or joke around. And that's what I'd been doing—for weeks! I felt sick.

After school, I found Mom in her office. "Hi, sweetie!" she said.

I burst into tears. I told her all about four square and taking the Lord's name in vain. "I don't know if I can stop," I said with a sniff.

She hugged me tight. "It might feel that way right now. But I know Heavenly Father can help you."

"How?" I asked.

"Repentance means turning back to Heavenly Father and trying hard to do better," Mom said. "It won't be easy, but you can pray for help. As you use better words, your old habit will fade."

Mom helped me make a list of new words I could say instead of the Lord's name. Then we prayed

together. I told Heavenly Father how sorry I was and asked for help to use good language.

The next day I took a deep breath before I played four square. When I missed the ball, I almost said Heavenly Father's name again, but I stopped. Instead, I said a word from my list.

"Oh, bananas!" I said. That felt good!

Each day I tried hard to use better language. I still messed up sometimes. But I kept praying and trying. Soon I went a whole game without saying the Lord's name. Then a whole week. Then a whole month!

I knew Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ helped me repent and change my habit. That felt better than winning any game! ●

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TAKE THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN?

One of the Ten Commandments is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7). This means that we should always speak about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ with reverence and love. We should not joke about Them or use Their names without respect. This commandment also means that we should represent the Savior well. When we call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ, we should do what He would do.*

*See Dale G. Renlund, "Accessing God's Power through Covenants," *Liahona*, May 2023, 36.

A Better Habit

ILLUSTRATION BY KIERSTEN FAGAN

In Primary, I learned that the Lord's name was special.

