

<b>Series:</b> Ten	<b>Reference:</b> Exodus 20:7; Matthew 5:33-37	<b>Title:</b> The Third	<b>Date:</b> 07.03.2022
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The third commandment is about the importance of understanding a name & using it correctly. By doing so, we avoid a situation that, as followers of Jesus, we should never find ourselves in!			

## COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

*(Opening Slide & introduction of video)*



Abbot & Costello's classic skit, *Who's on First*, illustrates how confusing names can be. Words & names are important - if you don't fully understand the context then it can lead to confusion.

The third commandment is about the importance of understanding a name & using it correctly. By doing so, we avoid a situation that, as followers of Jesus, we should never find ourselves in!

Turn with men to p52 to Exodus 20:7 and follow along as I read aloud...*“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”*

Taking God’s name in vain was so serious in the Old Testament that it was punishable by death (Lev 24), which teaches us great honor & respect for God. As Proverbs 9:10 states...*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*

Humanity may progress in technology, but in morality it devolves overtime. And sadly, the Church has lost her sense of awe of God’s name. As a result we struggle to experience the great glory of God today. A degrading of His Word & Ways across the board cause this as we Commandment 2 by remaking God into an idol reflective of our own desires, a fuzzy likable puppet on a string with no standards, will or moral conviction to speak of...remember, in breaking any of the Commandments 2-9, we automatically break the first - you shall have no other gods before Me. But we continually remake God into our own image instead of conforming to His. Biblical Christians who grasp this & live out of it are truly the salt & light of the earth preserving Truth while we await Christ’s return!

Earlier in Exodus 3 God had commanded Moses to go & speak to the Israelites. They were in the storm of slavery & God was going to use Moses to rescue them, to call them out to freedom - exactly what He finally did, and which He begins the 10 Commandments with - a reminder of rescue & precursor to the Gospel in Christ.

At that time Moses asked in Ex 3:13, *“Suppose I go to the Israelites & say to them, ‘the God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”* God answered, *“I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”* (V14). In our Bibles that name’s written in all caps for a reason - it was God’s sacred name.

Now, in Hebrew that statement I AM is EhYeh which means, I WILL BE. Meaning God is the one who was, is & forever will be. In other words God’s existence doesn’t depend on anything or anyone else, He simply IS - the beginning & end of all things. But Moses couldn’t say EHYEH in the first person, so God gave him the form he was to say it in which is ‘He WILL BE’ or YAHWEH in the third person, a name which occurs over 6,500 times in the Old Testament.

This name was so sacred that out of respect the Israelites actually stopped using it, replacing it with the Hebrew word ADONAY which means LORD. That is the name we now often use in English - but LORD in the sense of Lord of all things. But the Israelites went further, not wanting anyone reading Scripture to accidentally say this sacred name YAHWEH out loud. They took the consonants from it, YHWH, and replaced the vowels A-O-A from ADONAY in it to create a hybrid word, which was YAHOWAH. This was a word which no one actually ever used, it was just a visual reminder in the text not to say YAHWEH out loud, but to say ADONAY instead. Christians come along, not realizing at

first that YAHOWAH was an artificial word, so it eventually entered into English as JEHOVAH in translation.

It's important also to remember there were two words for Lord as well. One in all caps LORD, which is in reference to ADONAY or YAHWEH, God of all things. Then lord, or ADON, which is used for people of authority over another. So when we see Jesus as the LORD of lords, we know what that means.

God wants us to respect His name. Thinking about this command, many people, including us, break this commandment often. We go so far as to use God's name in place of a swear word. Evangelist, Ray Comfort, in doing street evangelism, often asks people if they have taken God's name in vain. If they're honest, they say yes. Then he asks, do you love your mother? They respond yes. Then asks, would you use your own mothers name as a replacement for a cuss word? And they say no.<sup>1</sup> Put into context & perspective, it's obvious to see the absurdity of disrespecting God in such a way.

But it's not just a matter of using the name wrongly in speech, we take God's name in vain by failing to live a life of integrity. In proclaiming Christ we can have all our theological ducks in order, but still live a life which isn't reflective of Him which is also taking His name in vain since there's no integrity between stated belief & behavior.

Turn with me to Ephesians 2:1-10 on p799 of your pew Bibles. Notice in vv1-3 it describes our state of being before repentance & trust in Christ - spiritually dead in our transgression & sin, disobedient to God's commands, controlled by our own evil desires. But, vv4-5 describe what God did for us in Christ. Due to His great love & mercy He made us alive in Christ - by His grace alone are we saved. Then in vv6-7 He describes our position in Christ in order to bring Glory to Him. Verses 8-9 reiterate that it's by grace through faith - faith being God's gift in order to grasp & understand the power of saving grace - that there's nothing we did to obtain it, or do to maintain it. But then v10 describes that this has all occurred in us in order that we'd be used by God in the good works He's prepared for us - that we live lives reflective of His character.

This tells us, Good Works are a result of salvation, not vice versa, which produces a gratitude to walk with God following His commandments well which are still relevant to us today. We do this under His grace since we won't do it perfectly. Remember, we're not freed to do as we please, but rather to become what we were originally intended to be - people created in the image of God, reflective of Him in our relationship to Him, and in our relationship with others which speaks of integrity, being people of our word. People who don't just say we have integrity, but actually have it - living out what we say we believe.

Turn with me now to our parallel passage to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment in Matthew 5:33-37 on p660 of your pew Bibles where Jesus speaks of the oaths we tend to make...*“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but*

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<sup>1</sup> Search LIVING WATERS RAY COMFORT on YouTube for his videos

*fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ 34But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”*

There’s a sense here of being sober about ourselves. Knowing our limitations. Not making promises we can’t keep. Having integrity in what we say & do. People who make big promises, but never follow through, are what Seinfeld might call ‘Big Talkers’. No one trusts them, or puts value in their words, or in what they’ll do! No one wants to be a big talker. We want to be trustworthy people, people whose actions match their words, remembering that what we do & say should reflect God’s character.

The Jews of Jesus’ day had put an interesting twist on all of this. Like us, they had trouble telling the truth consistently, so in order to guard themselves against being found guilty of swearing falsely by the name of God, it seems they’d firmly established the habit of *swearing by everything EXCEPT God*. They wanted to add some kind of force to their promises to make their words more credible, but they didn’t want to incur the judgment of God by swearing something in His name when they didn’t fully intend to make it good, or when it was not entirely true. They wanted to have their cake & eat it too. So they created what was in effect a lesser class of oaths – oaths that were bound to various parts of God’s creation rather than to God Himself. James Montgomery Boice refers to this practice as “evasive swearing.”<sup>2</sup>

To take His name in vain means to invoke His name emptily, lightly, or profanely – to use it without humbly acknowledging the holy character of the One whose name you’re invoking. To invoke the name of God in an oath or vow when your statement is false or when you don’t intend to honor your words is a direct violation of the third commandment. And to invoke the name of God over a trivial or inconsequential matter is also a violation of the third commandment, because taking the name of the Lord in vain includes taking it lightly – treating it as common or trivial.<sup>3</sup>

Thinking back to Exodus 20:7, the Hebrew word for vain there is *shav*. It means lying, deceitful, or meaningless.<sup>4</sup> God’s saying He doesn’t want His people to use His name in a way which is dishonest! This means we need to be very careful how we use God’s name in everyday speech. And, we don’t want to present or represent God in a way which is dishonest, disingenuous, or flippant. This dictates we need to be steeped in His word & to have it seep out into our lifestyle.

This is why Paul writes in Colossians 1...“*We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom & understanding that the Spirit gives,*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/16-yes-or-no-enough-matthew-533-37>

<sup>3</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/16-yes-or-no-enough-matthew-533-37>

<sup>4</sup> *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, s.v. “H7723, *shav*,” <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7723.htm>

*<sup>10</sup>so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord & please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup>being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance & patience, <sup>12</sup>and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness & brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” Very reminiscent of Ephesians 2, if you think about it.

God wants us to remember, there’s meaning in His name. It’s not just any name. So, when we use His name, we want to make sure we reflect a proper deference to God.

Whenever you’re reading your Bible & you see the word *LORD* in all capital letters, that’s an example of the editors showing respect for God’s name. In those instances, in the Hebrew Scripture, God’s actual, personal, covenant, name’s being used. But we don’t see that, and we don’t read it because they don’t even translate His name. God says in verse 2 of Exodus 20, “Here’s my name; I’m the one who did the delivering,” and now He’s saying, “so don’t use that name incorrectly. Show respect!”

Does your tongue respect God? Be careful with what you say! James tells us to tame our tongues because of how dangerous we can be with our mouths. *He says, “Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup>The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”* (James 3:5-6). In v2 of James 3, it compares the tongue to the small rudder which can steer a giant ship. How powerful & influential our tongues are! I remember sitting with the Sultan in the village after having given him a Bible which was not sure he’d yet read. At one point while I was flippantly talking trash about someone, this Muslim Sultan chided me by quoting that very verse! I was convicted, but also glad he’d been reading!

God wants us to respect His name, both in how we use it, but also in how we reflect Him in using it. We can show we’re thankful to Him for his rescue (Exodus 20:2) by not putting Him down by misusing His name or saying things inappropriately about Him or using His name as a curse instead of a blessing. Think about our overwhelming tendency to complain, gossip, or deride others just to make ourselves look good or feel better showing contempt for God’s creation! God wants us to respect Him in speech & lifestyle.

God’s name is His reputation. He acts for the sake of His name (Ezekiel 20:9). He leads us for the sake of His name (Psalm 23:3). God even saves us for the sake of His name (Psalm 106:8)! That’s how important God’s name is to Him. How often do we, in the course of our lives, participate in, or hear others cheapen God’s name? They cheapen it by turning such a crucial element of His character into little more than an expression of anger, pain, or frustration. In doing that, we take the Lord’s name in vain.

But again, not taking God’s name in vain is more than simply avoiding cursing with it. Remember, the word *vain* in Hebrew can also mean thoughtless or meaningless. We

don't want to simply have a religion of going through the motions of thoughtlessly praying to God as a mere form of lip service. The actual name of God is His personal, covenant name. We should regard it as a great treasure that we can even be in a relationship with God. And just as we don't want to go through the motions in our relationships with our dearest friends & families, so too God doesn't want us to merely go through the motions in our relationship with Him!

So, not taking God's name in vain means we live a life of integrity. *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"* Jesus asked in Luke 6:46. Acknowledging that God is our Creator, we belong to Him as He's our Lord, so we follow Him as He's our Savior & so we're grateful to Him for His grace, mercy & salvation. Therefore, living a life which completely contradicts Him is another way of taking God's name in vain. If He's Lord, then shouldn't we do what He says? If not, how's that honoring of His name?

As Brennan Manning said, "The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians, who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door, and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."<sup>5</sup> By the act of living a life devoid of integrity, we dishonor God's name & fail in our mission to witness to the world about the risen Savior (Matthew 28:18–20).

Behavior can feed the heart, and the heart certainly feeds behavior - it works both ways. Sometimes just outwardly practicing something reminds our heart of greater meaning, hopefully bringing us to the point of muscle memory where we naturally live out of it. So we focus on the goal of godly lives from godly hearts. We'll not speak truth in our hearts if we're not in love with the One who is Truth. Let's be truthful people because we hunger & thirst for righteousness. **Let's be truthful people because God re-created us to be pure in heart.** Let's be truthful people because we desire to be salt & light in a world which desperately needs our God & Savior, Jesus Christ. **Let's be truthful people because we long to live out the lovely character of the One who gave us life at the cost of His own life's blood.** Let's be truthful people because we are our Father's children. We need no other reason than these.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Brennan Manning, quoted in Ben Simpson, "The Ragamuffin Legacy," *Relevant*, April 16, 2013, <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/ragamuffin-legacy/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/16-yes-or-no-enough-matthew-533-37>