

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 52

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 55: *What is forbidden in the third commandment?*

ANSWER: The third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of any thing whereby God maketh himself known.

QUESTION 56: *What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?*

ANSWER: The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.



MONDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 139C

Scripture: Read Jeremiah 7:1-10

Key Thought: *We are not to dishonor God with our speech.*

Questions:

- ☞ How did the people of Judah in the days of Jeremiah take the name of the Lord in vain?
- ☞ How does using God's name carelessly break this commandment?
- ☞ How does complaining against providence break this commandment?
- ☞ How does perjury break this commandment?
- ☞ How does unbelieving prayer break this commandment?
- ☞ Can you think of other examples of dishonoring God with our speech?

Prayer

Notes: As noted last week, most people tend to think of the 3rd commandment almost exclusively as a prohibition against using God's name as an expletive. This greatly offensive practice, so common in our society, however, is but one application of the 3rd commandment. This is why the authors of our *Catechism* spoke more generally of "all profaning or abusing of any thing whereby God maketh Himself known." In the area of the spoken word, this not only applies to using any of God's names or titles in a careless or profane way, but also complaining against His providential acts (thus publicly undermining His glory), lying under oath (having sworn before God to tell the truth), and praying in a wrong manner (whether as a mere formality or with doubt in our hearts toward God). The *Larger Catechism* points out that we can even break the 3rd commandment by "not using God's name as is required," and by "being ashamed of it." That is, we take God's name in vain when we say nothing when circumstances would require that we speak the glorious name of God.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 139C

Scripture: Read Romans 2:17-24

Key Thought: *We are not to dishonor God with our lives.*

Questions:

- ☞ What do you associate with the name “Capone”? “Knox”? “Clinton”? Why? Do your actions reflect upon your family name?
- ☞ What did Paul mean when he wrote, “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you”?
- ☞ What is a hypocrite? How does a hypocrite take God’s name in vain?

Prayer

Notes: The 3rd commandment applies not only to what we speak, but also to what we do. There is an unbreakable connection between words and deeds. A close comparison of the two often reveals that they do not match each other well. This should not be the case for a follower of Christ, however. His words should be supported by his actions. When two people marry, the wife takes the name of the husband. From that day forward, for better or for worse, the actions of the wife reflect upon the name of the husband. Likewise, the husband’s actions reflect upon the name passed down to him from his parents. The names mentioned in the first discussion question conjure up certain opinions in those who hear them. This is not because every person who ever carried those names deserves the reputation they carry, but because one person shaped the world’s view of that name. We must understand that the world forms opinions of Christ by watching the lives of those who bear His name. A hypocrite is someone who is not what he claims to be. The word “hypocrite” literally means “a stage actor, or pretender.” His words claim he is a follower of Jesus, but his actions reveal that he is only pretending. When unbelievers see a hypocritical “Christian,” they conclude that God is just a joke and they ridicule Christ. Living a life that is not consistent with the holy character of Christ is a very serious breach of the 3rd commandment.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 139C

Scripture: Read Matthew 22:23-33

Key Thought: *We are not to dishonor God in our use of His Word.*

Questions:

- ☞ Who were the Sadducees? Were they known as religious men?
- ☞ What did the Sadducees want Jesus to say about the resurrection?
- ☞ How did Jesus respond to them?
- ☞ In what ways do people tend to misuse the Word of God?

Prayer

Notes: The 3rd commandment further prohibits the abusing of God's Word, by which He has made Himself known. Those who misuse the Word of God act as if they speak for Him, but they merely use His Word for their own advantage. The Sadducees, a well-known Jewish sect in Jesus' day that denied the resurrection of the dead, tried to use a portion of Scripture to trap Jesus into agreeing with them. Instead, Jesus demonstrated that they did not know the Scriptures at all, and put their foolish argument to shame. God's name is taken in vain when people quote the Scriptures scornfully or sarcastically; when they speak God's holy Word in a light or joking manner; or when they twist the Scriptures to justify any error or sinful course of action. To make light of or twist the words of another is a clear act of disrespect for that person. We must not only take care how we use God's names and titles, but also how we wield the sword of the Spirit. When we approach God's holy Word, we approach His wisdom. Christ Himself so identifies with the Word of God that He is called "the Word" that "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Those who play with the Word of God are like those who play with loaded firearms. It is only a matter of time until their foolishness ends in tragic loss.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 139C

Scripture: Read Malachi 1:6-14

Key Thought: *We are not to dishonor God with our worship.*

Questions:

- ☞ In Malachi 1, how had the priests despised the name of God?
- ☞ When we offer less than our best to God in worship, what do we communicate about His importance in our lives?
- ☞ According to Malachi 1:13, what else did the people say about God's worship? What did they mean?
- ☞ Do you consider God's worship "a weariness"? Do you come to worship prepared to give Him your best?

Prayer

Notes: Malachi 1 shows us very clearly that this matter of taking God's name in vain applies also to the way that we approach the worship of God. The priests of God were guilty before Him of "despising His name." The specific way that they had done this was by offering defiled sacrifices on the altar of God. The law required that the sacrifices brought to God be the very best—the first fruits—animals without spot or blemish. But the priests were offering lame and blind and sick animals that had no value to their owners, and allowing them to keep the best for themselves. But God exposed this wickedness for what it was—a despising of the name of God. When God's people fail to give Him the very best

of their resources, time, energy, attention, and service, they show that the honor of His name is less important than the establishment of their own name. Another way this sinful attitude manifested itself in Malachi's day was that the people considered the worship of God to be "a weariness," or a chore. They came begrudgingly out of a sense of duty, with no genuine joy and gladness to be in the presence of God. This too was a despising of His name, and it is no less common in our own day. Let us take care that we do not take the Lord's name in vain in our worship.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 139C

Scripture: Read 1 Samuel 2:12-29; Jude 1:8-13

Key Thought: *God will punish every misuse of His glorious name.*

Questions:

- ☪ What reason does God give for not taking His name in vain?
- ☪ What happened to Eli's sons? Why?
- ☪ Is everyone who takes God's name in vain punished for it in this life?
- ☪ Will any evade punishment forever? What will become of them in eternity?

Prayer

Notes: Question 56 assures us that "however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape His righteous judgment." A man may despise the name of another man in secret, but God hears every despising of His holy name, whether spoken with the lips or only in the heart. Further, He promises that He will not hold guiltless the one who misuses His name. There will be a day of reckoning. Sometimes it comes in this life, as it did for the sons of Eli. But even if God should not execute judgment on the profaners of His name in this life, their doom is to come. They will one day stand face-to-face with the One they have derided, and He will cast them into the blackness of darkness forever. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.