

## The Ten Commandments

### Commandment #3: “Do not take the Lord’s name in vain...”

#### 1. The Obvious Meaning

- a. Unfortunately, overt violations of the third commandment are quite common in our world today
  - i. It is not uncommon to hear God’s name used to express dismay, anger, shock or, even, jubilation
    1. All of these situations are unworthy of association with God
  - ii. The term “vain” (as translated in the ESV in v. 7) means empty or worthless
    1. It brings with it the idea of utilizing something for no good purpose
- b. In this case, the idea is clear enough... there is nothing more monumental or weighty in the universe than God
  - i. His very nature deserves our reverence and respect and, therefore, when we refer to Him in flippant or non-exalted terms, we denigrate His standing as our glorious God
  - ii. This is even more troublesome when we consider the biblical teaching that the words we speak reflect the condition of our hearts (Luke 6:45)
    1. When we can use God’s name in meaningless ways, our words demonstrate a heart that does not treasure Him above all things
- c. This must be contrasted with the biblical teaching that God is very concerned with the good standing of His name (see Isaiah 48:11; Ezekiel 36:22; Psalm 23:3)
  - i. God cares about how He is represented and, therefore, His name is to be revered (not trivialized) by His followers

#### 2. Other Applications

- a. While it is important that we make sure we do not violate the third commandment in the above way, we should also be wise to the fact that there are other, perhaps less obvious, ways we can take the Lord’s name in vain, here are a few:
  - i. False oaths
    1. Leviticus 19:12 reminds us that we are not to swear by God’s name falsely
      - a. How many times have we heard people lie and substantiate their claim by saying, “I swear to...”
      - b. This is evil precisely because it connects God’s good name to sin
      - c. More to the point for many, we should realize that our very identity as Christians means we represent the Lord

and, therefore, we besmirch His name when we do not honor our words

ii. False teaching

1. When a man seeks to speak God's Word and does so falsely, He lies in the name of God
2. While this does not require that the name "God" or "Jesus" or a synonym be utilized, the connection is clear... those who speak on behalf of God do so for His glory and, therefore, anyone who would deny God's glory by speaking in intentionally dishonest or even false claims uses the Lord's name in vain
3. You might think this is a bit strong but, I'll remind you, that God makes this connection
  - a. Those who spoke falsely, as prophets of God, in the Old Testament are said to "lie in MY name" (Jeremiah 23:25)

3. An important principle to live by

- a. Most of us understand the value of a good name
- b. If you've lived in our community for long, you realize that your name is either praised or despised based on the quality of your life and those who bear your family's name
- c. We are designed by God to associate those who belong to the same family
- d. In the same way, the Lord's name is either honored or mocked based on the behavior of His children
  - i. When you or I use His name to express outrage or shock or in a flippant manner, we are telling the world that He is nothing more than a euphemism for our emotions
  - ii. When we speak coarsely or falsely as representatives of His, we are saying something not only about our character, but about His
  - iii. When we speak with certainty in respects that are not true, we are telling the world that He cannot be trusted
- e. Conversely, when you and I honor God, by reverencing His name and reserving it for glory along and when we speak the truth about Him both in our lifestyle and words and when we honor Him by keeping our Word as representatives (or namesakes) of His, we keep the third commandment and bring Him glory