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SESSION 4

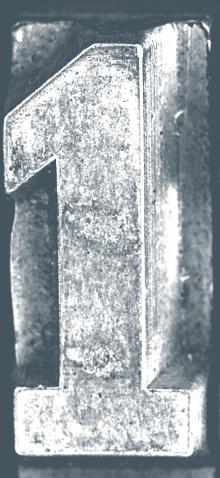
GOD MUST BE HONORED

What's in a name? A name is something bestowed upon us before or at birth, an aspect of our identity that comes from outside ourselves. Like it or not, your name comes from your parents, and changing it can be a difficult process. Likewise, when we give a child a name, we're exercising our authority. The baby isn't in charge. If you asked every baby as soon as they were born what they wanted to be called, we'd all be named "Waah!" Parents exercise authority by giving names to their children.

Names are important because they identify us, and they represent our reputation. Identity theft is a serious crime because it is representing oneself under the guise of another in order to gain access to confidential and privileged information. You guard your name because your name represents your life.

Considering the importance of names, it's no surprise to see how in the Third Commandment, God forbids us to take His name in vain and ensures that all who violate this Command will be punished. God's name is worthy of all honor. Breaking this Commandment brings punishment because of the weightiness of God's glory.

The Third Commandment Teaches That God's Name...



Is Worthy of All Honor

So we see that God has expressed His authority over us by naming us. But He has also expressed His desire for friendship with us by revealing to us His name. God revealed His name in an act of holy friendship with His people. The Jewish people revered His name to the point that they often refrained from uttering it, choosing instead to use the Hebrew word *Hashem*, which means “THE NAME.” Using “the name” was shorthand for referring to God.

What's In A Name?

What comes to mind when you hear certain names such as Amazon®, Apple®, Tim Tebow, or Miley Cyrus? After you've thought about it for a second, ask yourself why those particular things came to mind. Why those things and not something else?

You may remember from the famed Shakespeare play *Romeo and Juliet* when Juliet declares, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet...” The point she was making was to signify that a person’s character and reputation are not solely determined by the birth name given to that person. Those things come, for the most part, by how a person lives his/her life. As a result, that person’s character and reputation becomes identified with their name. Just think about it. You have positive feelings for the name *Mother Theresa* because of the character, reputation, and life associated with it. On the other hand, you despise and reject the name *Hitler* because of the villainous and corrupt life associated with it.

When it comes to a name and its connection with character and reputation, the same is true for the God of this universe. In Scripture, we see how important God views His name and how much of His character and reputation is reflected through both His name and the different titles He holds. By looking at God’s character and reputation throughout Scripture, we come to understand exactly how worthy His name is of all honor.

God is big into His Name! He is filled with zeal and jealousy for it, which is why it is no surprise that He so forcefully condemns the misuse of His name in the Third Commandment.

One of the main reasons we are told not to misuse God's name is because His name is powerful. The beautiful truth of Scripture is that God allows us to know Him by name. We are given access to the God who made heaven and earth. We are strengthened by the name of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 5:11

Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses His name.

► What is the significance of God revealing His name to His people? What does God's name tell us about His character?

► Have you ever experienced someone using your name in a way you did not approve? How did you respond?

Should Not Be Blasphemed Against

The Fourth Commandment (Honor your father and mother) comes with a promise. The Third Commandment, however, comes with a punishment. God does not overlook blasphemy, and neither should His people.



Ways of Taking God's Name in Vain

1. Using God's name flippantly.

Cursing and swearing certainly fall into this category. Think of the ways we use text abbreviations, such as OMG, or we say "Oh my God" without giving God the reverence He deserves. People also use the name of Jesus Christ as a curse.

2. Using God's name untruthfully.

When we speak about God in ways that are not true, we are discrediting Him and tarnishing His reputation. Consider the importance of your own name. When someone gossips about you or spreads lies about you, you suffer as a result. You seek to restore your name. Now magnify your sense of jealousy for your name millions of times, and you begin to see why God is so adamant that His name be used in truthful and honorable ways.

3. Using God's name hypocritically.

There's a sense in which, as Christians, we don't choose to be witnesses to Christ; we already are witnesses. We are all witnesses to something. The only question is: What are you a witness to? Whenever we claim the name of God and then live in contradiction to His will, we are taking His name in vain.

3 John 1:6-7

You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God, since they set out for the sake of the Name.

► What are some examples of trivializing God's name that you have witnessed? How can we deepen our respect for God's name?

► Which of these ways of taking God's name in vain do you struggle with the most? In what ways can we support each other in obeying this Command?

The Great Name of Our God

My wife and I have two boys. When my wife was pregnant with each of them, we thought carefully and prayed fervently as to what we should name them. After all, they would have this name their entire life and it would be a means to how others would identify with them. One's name doesn't just give identification—it also becomes associated with one's reputation and character.

Think of your own name. When others speak your name, what is said about you? Do they tarnish your good name? Or do they speak highly of you? Are you known for good character? How does your name reflect your relationship with Jesus?

Just as you would not desire someone to speak poorly of you, we should not dare to speak wrongly of our Lord. His great name is a testament to His holiness, goodness, power, and every other character quality He possesses. In fact, He goes by many names—Yahweh, Jehovah Jireh, Adonai, Jesus, and so on. No matter the name attributed to God, each speaks to who He is and His character. And God takes His name very seriously. In Leviticus 24, we see just how severe it is to misuse the name(s) of God. As such, we must be careful not to flippantly misuse the name of the Lord. Not only does God value His own name but our words and actions also speak to whether or not we truly value the precious name of our Savior. Therefore, let us strive to declare that His name is great.



Is To Be Made Known

It's often suggested that the Third Commandment is one of the most broken of the Ten—even among Christians. None of us are guiltless when it comes to this Command, and God explicitly promises judgment against us all.

There is One who has never misused God's name. In fact, He upheld and uplifted God's name in all He said and did. Jesus honored God's name as holy. And in the Lord's Prayer, He called us to pray that God would hallow His name.

- ▶ How did Jesus hallow God's name through His life and ministry? What are some ways we can hallow God's name in the world? together as the church?

It's the Father who brings God's kingdom, supplies our daily bread, announces forgiveness from sins, and delivers us from the Evil One, and He accomplishes all of these things through the sending of His Son. Likewise, it's the Father who hallows His name through the work of His Son. Jesus hallows God's name. He shows us what God is like.

Now that we are free from the penalty of our sin, we are free to hallow the name of the God who created and redeemed us. We have been given God's name. "Christian" means to be "Christlike." We are God's people, called by His name. As Christians, we carry the name of Jesus Christ. That sounds like a daunting task, doesn't it? The good news is that the name of Jesus has power.

The Name Above All Names

Think for a moment about a person you really care about, perhaps a best friend, a parent, sibling, or coach. This person most likely shows qualities like faithfulness, love, generosity, and kindness. You cannot help but speak highly of him/her because of all they mean to you. If you were to hear a negative comment, your reaction would be to rise up in their defense. It would be devastating to hear of destructive words being spoken against them.

I remember a specific time when unpleasant words were spoken about my husband. The words bore a false testimony to my husband's good name. And they caused me great pain because I love him and desire that others see him as someone to be valued.

Often times many people abuse the greatest name in all creation, the name of Jesus. As Christians, we not only recognize that His name is most valuable, but we also identify with Him as we are marked as Christ-followers. Even though we may sometimes fail to uphold the holiness of Jesus' name by what we say or do, we should take comfort in the truth that through Him we have been forgiven. And because of His great love shown for us through that forgiveness, we should desire to make His name known throughout the earth.

Though others may mistreat the name of Jesus or even persecute us for praising His name, it is still our mission to tell the world the greatness of His name. We have the greatest reason for making His name known because of the work He accomplished for us on the cross. No other name is greater and worthy of such honor.

Luke 11:2

*He said to them,
“Whenever you pray,
say: Father, Your
name be honored
as holy. Your
kingdom come.*

► Why should we see our desire to spread the fame of Christ connected to our mission as Christ's disciples?

GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY

We would have to be pretty sheltered to not notice God's name being treated flippantly and with disrespect throughout our culture. Whether from people at school or through the movies/television we watch, it is not uncommon for us to be enamored with a constant mistreatment of God's name and, by extension, the character of God Himself. Not only that, but if we are honest, we too would have to admit that we have mistreated God's name. The session did a great job of elaborating on the different ways we can mistreat God's name, thus showing us areas where we have failed to honor God's name and need to repent.

In what way do you struggle with taking the Lord's name in vain? How do these examples threaten our witness as followers of Jesus?

However, not only is it important that we ourselves properly revere and honor God's name it is also of great importance that every follower of Christ make God's name known throughout the world. As believers, we are on mission to make known the glory of our God's grace in rescuing people from darkness and bringing them into His marvelous light. It is the life goal, the ultimate ambition, for every follower of Christ to lift up His name.

How does the truth that we have forgiveness through Jesus spur you to tell others about His greatness? Why is it important to live in such a way that Jesus' name is honored?