

TEN | In the Name

Rob Rogers June 20, 2021

Introduction

We're in Week 4 in our series on the Ten Commandments, and each week we see from a different angle that the Law of God is not evidence of God's anger, or a demand for obedience! The law of God more than anything else is evidence of God's Love.

It's overwhelming ALL that God did for the nation of Israel before He ever gave them a single commandment. He confronts Pharaoh, he works miracles, he sends the plagues, He parts the Red Sea, He is hand holding the Hebrew people every step of the way. In Week 1, *before* He gave them a single commandment, HE CHOSE them.

Exodus 20:2

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Pastor Jimmy has done a great job over the last two weeks helping us understand and see the importance and the difference between the 1st and 2nd commandments...

1. The law is good — it is a tutor. The law reveals God's character to us, what He's like — and the law leads us to Jesus.
2. Make no idols — our hearts, our idol factories — the only thing that will purge your heart of idolatry is God's presence

Today, we're moving into the 3rd commandment, which of all the commandments is probably the most misunderstood.

Taking the name of the Lord in vain

Exodus 3:7

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

In some families where you're not allowed to say the word gosh because it's too close to God, or jeez is too close to Jesus, we create rules in order to keep ourselves from even coming close to breaking other rules. But the DANGER in doing this is that we forget why we created the rule in the first place!

**Our obedience becomes about the RULE itself
RATHER THAN why the rule was created!**

Even an ancient Hebrew tradition that's still widely followed today, religious Jews do not say the name of God aloud — there is such reverence for the name of God. The scribes that would make copies of the Torah, when they would get to the name of God, they would use a different ink and pen, out of fear of WRITING the name of God in a plain or unworthy manner. And there is something incredibly beautiful about that. The respect and awe and reverence for the name of God is astounding!

But what I want us to see today is that while this commandment definitely includes using God's name in a flippant or irreverent way... it also means a **WHOLE LOT MORE than just that.**

- In fact, if this one commandment was followed throughout this history of the world, it would have prevented some of the most horrendous injustices the Church has ever been complicit in or perpetrated on the world.
- Jesus Himself was constantly running into this very issue — and it looks a whole lot different than what we would typically think of “using God's name in vain.”

More than words

John 2:13-14

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, [*now, remember from Week 1... the Passover was a yearly celebration to commemorate God delivering the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt*] and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.

This practice possibly began with good intentions... people were traveling for miles on foot with their whole family to the Temple to make sacrifices. The religious leaders set up a market where someone who wasn't able to bring an animal sacrifice to offer in the temple could purchase one.

But what happened over time turned into absolute corruption.

1. The people who did bring sacrificial animals had to have their animals “approved” by the religious leaders. And even with an animal, that by God's standards would have been approved, people were turned away, but then immediately told that they could by a “temple approved” animal for an exorbitant amount of money! **This was full on extortion in the name of God!**
2. The passage talks about the money-changers, currency exchange stations, where they would hike up the exchange rate to line their own pockets. So not only would you get ripped off exchanging money, but then you're getting ripped off buying a “temple-approved” sacrifice.

And what was supposed to be a sanctuary for those seeking to be made right with God, became a refuge for the wicked!

John 2:15-17

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

Matthew 21:13

He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a **house of prayer**,’ but you make it a **den of robbers**.”

*Jesus says “You're thieves, you're made my house, and den of robbers, a house of extortion, of taking advantage of the disadvantaged for your own benefit and **you're doing it all in MY NAME!**”*

Jesus saw the religious leaders leveraging the NAME OF GOD for their own benefit and was so furious, that when He saw it, He then left, and made a whip!

- He didn't just happen to have one, or pick one up nearby... He left the temple and took the time to gather all the materials He would need in order to fashion a whip and barge back into the Temple and went to town on these people!

Jesus is furious about GOD'S NAME being leveraged, being used to do something that GOD has absolutely nothing to do with!

**Using God's name in vain — or misusing the name of God doesn't just mean *not* using His name flippantly or irreverently, the third commandment is telling us —
“don't put God's stamp of approval on something that God has absolutely nothing to do with!”
“Don't leverage the name of God for your own selfish purposes.”**

Using the name of God in vain is taking the Name of God and using His Name as a stamp of approval on something that God would never approve of. It's using God's Name to manipulate others. It's the use of God's Name and all that He represents, and intentionally misrepresenting Him to world around you.

Crusades

In the 3rd century, The Emperor of Rome, Constantine legalized Christianity... persecution ended for Christians. But over time, Christianity became the religion of the Empire and was essentially hijacked for political power and advantage. When you survey the history of the church from this point forward it is saturated with horrendous corruption, and governments around the world had their hooks in churches, controlling them like puppets.

God's name is being used for all kinds of things God had nothing to do with.

During the crusades... Jerusalem became a political target, and Pope Urban II issued the first religious battle cry to western Christians take back and liberate the Holy Land... and the phrase that was rampant throughout the Christian world was “God wills it.” The crusades were not a Christian initiative. The crusades were a political conquest that utilized the name of God and the Church of God to propagate a politically advantageous agenda. The crusades had nothing to do with God.

What the political and religious leaders of that day failed to remember is the fact that when Jesus Himself was in Jerusalem it wasn't liberated, and not one single time did Jesus ever call for the political liberation of Jerusalem...

- So why in the world would God all of sudden demand the liberation of Jerusalem nearly 1,000 years later?
- *Here's why, human beings are in the habit of putting God's stamp of approval on purposes that God would never approve of.*

Slavery

For years, pastors and preachers in America used God's name, and misused the scriptures in order to justify and condone slavery. But somehow, and very conveniently for themselves, they missed the chapter after the TEN Commandments were given where it says:

Exodus 21:16

“Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death.”

In the New Testament, slave-traders and people who owned slaves are listed among those who are “ungodly and sinful” and are in the same category as those who beat their own parents, murderers, adulterers and perverts, sexually immoral, those who practice homosexuality, liars and perjurers in **1 Timothy 1:8-10**.

But somehow, they made an exception for themselves, and instead, twisted the scriptures to mean something that would benefit themselves at the expense of an entire race of people, and they did it all as God's representatives, and in God's name!

Misusing the name of God

Proverbs 30:8-9

...give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ⁹lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and **steal** and profane **the name of my God**.

Agur is the author of this proverb and He recognized that any action he took as someone who trusts in God, is a reflection on the character of God and would be a misuse or a vain usage of the name of God

Many of us have had experiences in life where someone who represented God did something, or said something, that left us with an impression of God that has nothing to do with what God is actually like!

Pastor Rob related his experience as a fairly-new believer, when he was in a showy church, and a visiting speaker was brought in to talk about money. Not humility, not gratitude, not appreciation or praise for the widow's mite, not even instruction on biblical stewardship, but in the name of God, the speaker gave a heavy-handed, emotionally manipulative, demand for money. The young Rob left thinking that he didn't want anything to do with it, and he didn't think God did either.

Later as a pastor in Washington state, while counseling a couple, the wife told the family and Rob, that God was calling her to divorce her husband and leave her son behind, because God had a calling on her life that He couldn't fulfill as long as she remained married. Over and over again, we're sitting down with her, looking at the scriptures, "*Listen, you made a vow! You took an oath, you entered into covenant relationship before God... God is not calling you to violate that because doing so would be in direct contradiction to what He has already commanded you to do as spouse and as a mom!*"

The real issue is, you want to do what you want to do and you're trying to use God to do it!

Some of you right now are actively using God as a justification, as a means, to do whatever YOU want to do — God has nothing to do with it — and He takes MISUSING HIS NAME seriously.

In fact, read the rest of the commandment...

Exodus 20:7

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will **not hold him guiltless** who **takes his name in vain.**"

- OBJECTION: Well what does that mean? I thought God was a God of love!
 - It is BECAUSE God is a God of love that He gives this warning! Because every single one of us know the damage that is done when people use and manipulate God's name for their own selfish purposes!
 - A lot of times the damage to the people around them is irreparable barring a miracle of God in their life!

Using the forgiveness of God as a means to continue sinning

This is why Paul says:

Romans 6:1

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

*Paul is calling out the people who are using the forgiveness of God as a means to continue sinning!
They're using the grace of God as a license to SIN!*

**But God is not offering forgiveness as a means people to CONTINUE IN SIN,
God extends forgiveness to those who are TURNING AWAY FROM SIN!**

Over and over, after Jesus performed a miracle in someone's life, what would He tell them?
Go and sin no more!

This is what the 3rd commandment is all about!

Don't take the LORD's name in Vain.

Don't misuse the name of God for you own self-centered, self-serving purposes.

***“Don't put my stamp of approval on something
that I never in a million years would approve of!”***

**If you are using the word of God, or the law of God, to manipulate what YOU KNOW is true
of God — eventually you wake up one day and realize that you've missed God altogether.**

One of the primary purposes of the Pharisees was to identify the Messiah when he came on the scene... and they had made such a regular practice of manipulating and misusing the name of God, when God in human flesh was standing right in front of their faces, they completely missed Him. And not only that — they crucified Him.

Conclusion

YOU:

- Some of you have been going for YEARS, excusing your own sin, because “If I confess my sin, God will forgive me,” you've made room for compromise...
- You're playing games with God... and you know it. You're not surrendered to God... you believe in God... but you're not submitted to God, you don't KNOW GOD. You're using God.
- And you're in danger of MISSING GOD altogether because you're using His name in vain.
- The purpose of this commandment is the fact that God knows that inside every single one of us is the propensity to use God's name for our own selfish ends and miss Him altogether.
- God is saying.... PLEASE don't do it! Because if you do, you'll not only be in danger of missing ME altogether, but you'll do irreparable damage to other people in the process...

Are you guilty of this? Are there things in your life that you know God is not pleased with, you know it's sin, you know it, and you know that God knows it... but you're using the grace and forgiveness of God as a way to excuse your sin?

Here's the challenge for you today: **BE HONEST. GET REAL.**

Quit pretending like your sin is okay with God.

One of two options for you today...

1. If you're going to continue in that sin anyway, quit lying to yourself, to God, and to others about it. Quit playing religious games, putting on the religious mask and just admit what you're doing... you're using God's name in vain... to do whatever it is you want to do. Admit it! Even if you have no intention of changing... admit it... because as long as you're being dishonest with yourself and with God... nothing is going to change in you...
2. If you've been playing religious games, if you've found a religious loophole... and you don't want to miss God... you don't want to take that risk and you're ready to stop using God as justification for your own sin or selfishness... if you want to turn away from whatever your sin is and come before God... **now is the time.**

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of background did you grow up in, regarding how you treated the name of God? How do you feel it affected your relationship with God?
2. Explain why Jesus was so offended/angered spiritually by the sellers and money-changers in the temple.
3. Through this sermon, have you come to any new awareness of the greater scope of this commandment? Which aspect impressed you the most?
4. Have you had an experience where someone who represented God did something that left you with an impression of God, that has nothing to do with what God is actually like? How did it affect you?
5. How have *you* leveraged the name of God for your own selfish purposes?
6. Read the second half of Exodus 20:7 – what does it mean that the Lord will “not hold him guiltless”?

NOTES