



# The Ten Commandments

Sermon Transcript  
April 24, 2016

In All You Do . . . .  
Exodus 20:7

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## **Sermon Text**

### **Exodus 20:7**

<sup>7</sup>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.

## **The Ten Commandments**

You shall have no other gods before me.  
You shall not make for yourself any idols.  
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.  
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Honor you father and your mother.  
You shall not murder.  
You shall not commit adultery.  
You shall not steal.  
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  
You shall not covet.

## Introduction

We come to the third commandment today; *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”*

Lets begin by remembering where we are in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments can be divided into two sections. The first four commandments form the first section and they tell us what our duty is towards God.

You shall have no other gods before me.  
You shall not make for yourself any idols.  
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.  
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

We know that Jesus summarizes these first four commandments by telling us that we are called to *“love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* He goes on to say, *“This is the great and first commandment.”* In other words, it doesn’t get any bigger than this. It can’t get anymore important than this. We are to *“seek first the kingdom of God.”* We are *“to count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”* And so when you look at these first four commandments, you discover what it means to love God. To love God is to worship God.

C. S. Lewis wrote a little book called *Reflections on the Psalms*. As he was reading through the Psalms, he confessed that it bothered him that God is constantly calling us to praise him. Why would God be constantly calling us to worship him? It came across to him as if there was some kind of insecurity within God or that God was in need of our worship and praise. But we know that God does not need anything. Paul says in Acts 17:25 that God is not *“served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”*

It wasn’t until C. S. Lewis looked around and made a general observation about life that the worship of God took on a whole new meaning for him. He said that when we delight in something it is very natural for us to offer our praise in response to what we enjoy. He put it this way, *“The world rings with praise — lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game — praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles,*

even sometimes politicians or scholars.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, whatever you find to be a delight, you have no problem offering your spontaneous praise and inviting others to share in your delight. “Look at that beautiful sunset! . . . You have got to read this book, it is incredible! . . . Don’t you just love that song? . . . Did you see that last second shot that Kris Jenkins made for Villanova to win the NCAA basketball tournament? Amazing!” Lewis said, “all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, you don’t fully experience the joy of something until you offer your praise for it.

There is nothing in the universe greater than God. Jesus said eternal life is *knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom God has sent.*” David said in Psalm 27 that if he had one wish in life it would be boiled down to this, *“that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD.”* Reflecting on the words of C. S. Lewis, Sam Storms concludes that if our satisfaction in God is not complete until we express our worship and praise for God “then God’s effort to elicit my worship is the most loving thing God could possibly do for me.”<sup>3</sup>

That should change the way you view these first four commandments that call us to worship God. The catechism defines these first four commandments as “our duty to God.” And it is our “duty” to worship God as creatures who live dependently upon God. But because of who God is and because God desires our greatest good, he gives himself to us and shares himself with us. There is nothing greater that God could share with us than himself. And so these first four commandments are an expression of God’s love for us. They teach us how to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

When it comes to finding our delight in God, here is what we have seen to this point. God begins by telling us “who” to worship. We are to worship only God because our souls will not find rest until we find it in God. In the second commandment we are told “how” to worship. We are not free to worship God any way we want to. God has prescribed for us how to worship him. Through Jesus, through the written Word of God and the corporate worship with God’s people, we worship God in spirit and in truth.

This morning we come to the third commandment, *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”* There is more being said here than what some may be thinking. I grew up in a Christian home. My dad was a pastor. I was taught as a child to not “take the name of the Lord in vain” by using phrases like, “Oh my God!” or using the name of Jesus in a flippant manner or as a means of cursing. Because of my upbringing, it never has really been a struggle for me to not use God’s name in a way that so many others use as part of their normal conversation. And so when it comes to

this commandment, I always felt I did pretty well in keeping it. But when I first began to study this commandment, I discovered there are many ways to take the name of God in vain and I am far from innocent in this matter. This commandment doesn't just address what comes out of my mouth. It also addresses how I live my life. When I claim one thing about God and live another way, I am taking the name of God in vain.

If the first commandment tells me "who" to worship and the second commandment tells me "how" to worship, what then does the third commandment tell me? It tells me "when" to worship. You might be tempted to think that is the issue of the fourth commandment with the keeping of the Sabbath. Perhaps you might argue, "that is when we should worship—on the Sabbath." But this commandment reminds us that worship is a 24/7 calling. Worship is not a one day a week calling. This commandment conveys what Paul is getting at in Colossians 3:17, "*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*"

### **What is in a name?**

And so we read, "*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.*" Through this commandment, we are told to be careful how we use the name of God. In order to understand this commandment, it is important to recognize that you can't separate the name from the person. The name points us to the person's identity.

If you were taking time to observe the text, perhaps you would make the observation that the third commandment is stated differently than the first commandment. In the first commandment, God refers to himself in the first person, "*You shall have no other gods before me.*" But God doesn't use the first person in the third commandment to refer to himself. He doesn't say, "You shall not take my name in vain." Instead, he uses his name to refer to himself. "*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.*" Some of you may recall that when Senator Bob Dole was running for President in 1996, he would often refer to himself in the third person. He was made fun of for that. Instead of saying, "I'm back!" He said of himself, "Bob Dole is back." But that is what God is doing in this third commandment. I think when we read the name *LORD* in English we see a title more than a name. But don't forget what we have been saying the last several weeks. Whenever you see this word with all four letters capitalized it is referring to the sacred name for God revealed to Moses when he met God at the burning bush. In Hebrew, it is the name Yahweh, from which we get the English word Jehovah. And so it reads, "*You shall not take the name Yahweh, your God in vain.*"

Do you remember what this name for God means? Literally, this name for God means “*I am who I am.*” But it is more than just a name. When we name our children, sometimes we are drawn to a name because of its meaning. Or, sometimes, we just like how it sounds or how it fits with the last name. But to the Hebrew mind, there was more to the name than that. A person’s identity was wrapped up in their name. And so it is with God. Through this name, God was saying something about himself. He is self-existent, self-sufficient and the supreme authority over all things. Nothing caused God to be. He has no beginning and no end. He is the eternal present “*I Am.*” When you couple that with the scene that unfolds with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai, having delivered them from slavery in Egypt we discover that this God is also the God who saves and has the power to redeem our broken lives.

This sacred name for God stands for God himself. He is actually using a figure of speech here called a *synecdoche*. That is when you use a part of something to refer to the whole thing. For example, if I were to ask you to “lend me a hand” I am not asking you to sever your hand from your arm so that I can borrow it for awhile. Instead, I am asking for “you”- in your entire being - to help me do something. So it is with the name of God. When we are commanded, “*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain*” we are not to speak of God in a way that diminishes the glory of God.

Think about it in the positive sense. When we read in Psalm 8, “*Oh LORD our Lord, how majestic in your name in all the earth . . .* we are really saying that God himself is majestic. Or when we pray, “*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . .* we are really praying that God himself would receive honor and glory. And so we don’t want to say anything or do anything that diminishes the glory of God. The Hebrew word for “glory” is the word *kabod*. It means “weight” or “burden” or “heavy.” Douma says, “We must acknowledge his imposing power and give him praise befitting his level of majesty. The opposite would be to minimize the name of the Lord, to underestimate, despise and scorn the name. It would be treating something weighty as though it were light. Giving ‘glory’ would be replaced by cursing or blasphemy.”<sup>4</sup>

This is where the idea of “cursing” God is tied to this commandment. But in this context, it is more the attitude of defying God than the way we casually use the name of God when we say things like “Oh my God.” I will address that issue shortly, but at the heart of breaking this commandment is the notion of defying the living God. That is what it means to curse or blaspheme the name of God.

In Isaiah 36-37, we have the story of the city of Jerusalem being surrounded by the

Assyrian army. The army of Assyria is so close to the walls of the city that the people inside the city walls could hear the king of Assyria taunting the people of Judah. Hezekiah, Judah's king, encouraged the people to trust God and that God would deliver them from the hand of the Assyrians. Mockingly, the king of Assyria said to them, "*Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria?*" By comparing the living God with these false gods—these non-gods—we read in Isaiah 37 that the king was "reviling" God and "mocking" God. He degraded God to a second-rank deity who could accomplish no more than the gods of the surrounding nations. This gets to the heart of the breaking of this commandment. At worst, to take the name of the LORD in vain is to "think and speak and act disparagingly with regard to God."<sup>5</sup>

In preparation for this sermon, I discovered this week that back in 2006 there was a movement called "the Blasphemy Challenge." It was directed towards young people and it encouraged them to record themselves on YouTube denouncing their belief in the Holy Spirit and for many it was followed with them denouncing Jesus and the existence of God. It was sponsored by a group of atheists who were mocking the notion of the unpardonable sin mentioned in Matthew 12. The circumstances surrounding what Jesus called "the unpardonable sin" was attributing his miracles to the work of Satan. This Jesus said, is a sin against the Holy Spirit. It is a sin that reflects a willful and flagrant rejection of God. Philip Ryken says that the literal translation of the commandment to "*not take the name of the LORD your God in vain*" is "You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God for nothingness."<sup>6</sup> That is what it means to curse and blaspheme the name of God. It is to consider God to be as "nothing" and of no consequence. Watching some of those videos where young people were denouncing the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus and the existence of God, they could do so because to them God was a non-entity. He was seen as "nothingness."

As an aside, since I mentioned the unpardonable sin, some people are afraid that they committed this sin and wonder if they can ever be forgiven. Most theologians believe it was a sin that was unique to the time of Christ because it was attributing his miracles to the work of Satan. We also know of atheists, people who once denounced the existence of God, who now confess their faith in Jesus and their belief in God. However, today is the day of salvation and the essence of this sin is unbelief. And so the sober warning for all is that while there is still time, repent of your sin and turn in faith to Jesus. Because if you die in your unbelief, there is no pardon for sin. And so the call of this commandment is to not disregard or defy God as though he were "nothingness" but rather the call is to worship God and give God the glory that is due his name.

## **In all you do . . .**

How then do we break this commandment? How do we, perhaps unwittingly, diminish the glory of God by what we say and what we do? I would imagine, for most of us, there is not this spirit within us that openly curses God or defies God. But there are ways we can take God's name in vain, or diminish his glory through what we do and what we say. I offer these examples for your careful reflection so that *whatever you do, in word or deed* may be done in *the name of the Lord Jesus*.

Swearing: I would encourage you to consider not using the name of God or Jesus in the context of swearing. I know it is a common thing in our culture to do so. Robert Schenck is a pastor and he was sitting on a plane. He could hear the conversation behind him and it was laced with all kinds of profanity with the Lord's name attached to these words, as is commonly done. He couldn't take it anymore, so he turned around and asked the gentlemen if they were pastors. Somewhat incredulous, the men responded with "What the . . . . . would ever make you think that?" He said, with a smile, "Well, I am in the ministry and I am amazed at your communication skills. You just said, God, damn, hell and Jesus Christ in one sentence. I often have trouble getting all of that into one sermon."<sup>7</sup> I actually agree with Philip Ryken who says that prevalent use of the name of Jesus in the context of cursing is evidence to the truth of Jesus . . . "it shows the deep down they really know there is a God."<sup>8</sup> Why is it this name, the name of Jesus, that is always taken in vain and not some other religious figure?

I understand that you may say that you aren't given to use profanity, but when you use the name of God in this casual way you really don't mean anything by it. It is just an expression. Perhaps, it has just become habit. But that is exactly the point. We don't want to reduce the name of God to "nothingness" as if there is not weight or meaning to his name. Rather, we want to ascribe glory to his name.

Using God: We take God's name in vain when we claim that something is the will of God and we do so to advance our own agenda. The issue at hand may even be something that is good. When you invoke the name and the will of God and attach it to whatever you are speaking about you run the risk of taking the Lord's name in vain. You run the risk of using God's name for your agenda. I am not saying that God doesn't lead us nor am I saying that God doesn't speak to us and put things on our hearts. You just have to be careful how forcefully you use his name for you own purposes.

I think of this building project we are endeavoring to raise money for. It is an issue that



has been in process since 2012 and actually the seed for this expansion was planted all the way back in the 1990's when the first addition was built. It was always seen as a "first addition." We have prayed. We have sought counsel. We have a shared leadership that has embraced this vision. It is not the vision of one person. We have seen God lead along the way and that has given us confidence to step out in faith. And yet after all of that, I would risk taking the Lord's name in vain if I came to you and suggested that God told me we must build. When we claim God's authority for our own decisions, even decisions that may be right, we end up using God and that diminishes his name. Be careful with how you use the phrase, "the Lord told me . . ."

Hypocrisy: Another way we take the name of God in vain is when we claim to be followers of Jesus and yet the way we live says suggests something else. I would say that to a certain degree we all can wrestle with this because no one is perfect. And yet the tone of humility and love needs to mark us because the testimony of God is on display through us. In Titus 2, Paul is giving instructions to Titus as to what to teach the older men, the older women, the younger women and the younger men. He is really addressing the issue of how to live. Things like being sober-minded, self controlled and not giving to slander and being faithful to your spouse are all part of what he addresses here. Right in the middle of his instructions on how to live, he gives the motivation for why we would strive to be a good testimony. He says in Titus 2:5 "*that the word of God might not be reviled.*" People make conclusions about God by watching our lives. We can take the name God in vain by diminishing the goodness of God through the way we live. If people at work know you are a follower of Christ, you ought to strive to be the best worker because you are reflecting God through what you do.

Self-Sufficiency: Finally, I think we take God's name in vain when we live self-sufficient lives. It is always the challenge of living in an affluent culture. It is the challenge of the middle class. Our wealth and our jobs and our possessions—our prosperity—can cause us to forget how much we need God. Don't forget that the name for God, *I Am*, is a reminder that God alone is "self-sufficient." I can take God's name in vain but not saying anything at all. My lack of dependence upon God through prayer can be a sign of how I diminish God's name and God's place in my life. God is most glorified when I am most satisfied with him. And so a life of dependency upon God is how I bring glory to God. I bring glory to God when I trust in God.

I want you to see, that this commandment reaches into everything I do. I want God to be glorified through how I speak of him. I want his will to be done. I want my life to be a reflection of his love. I want to live in dependence upon God. *Hallowed be his name.*"

## The Name of Jesus

This brings me to Jesus. In Acts 4:12, Peter says to the religious leaders of his day, *“there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* It is not just the mere utterance of the name of Jesus that saves us. The name points us to the person. It is Jesus whom we worship. Through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, there is forgiveness of sin. And so we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and we believe it to be true in our hearts as well. *“For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”*

I read an article recently because the title caught my eye. It went like this, *Cancel your trips to Sodom and Sinai*. Sodom, of course, is that wicked city that God destroyed in the Old Testament and Sinai is where God gave the Ten Commandments. When confronted with Ten Commandments, our temptation is to run to Sodom or to Sinai.

When we feel that God’s law is too demanding or even out of touch with contemporary thought and culture, we find ourselves running to Sodom thinking that we will find freedom in shaking ourselves free from God. But in the end, it is bondage to ourselves and to our passions. But the answer is not found in running to Sinai, either. The answer to responding to God is not “try harder” or “work harder” to make yourself good and acceptable to God. Just look at the third commandment. *“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.”* This commandment is not just about using the name of God inappropriately through casual conversation. Every time my life doesn’t match my profession of faith, I am taking God’s name in vain. The fingerprints of my sin mark everything I do and there is no way I can fully keep the law of God. Every ounce of self-righteousness is removed when we come to these commandments.

When confronted with the Ten Commandments and my inability to keep them, where should I run? The answer is Calvary. The answer is the cross. Erik Raymond says, *“wear out the path to the cross!”*<sup>9</sup> Keep turning in repentance to Jesus. Anything else is taking God’s name in vain. Your answer is not in finding freedom in yourself and your own judgments. Nor, is your answer found in your own pride and your self-righteousness that causes you to think that God favors you because of something you have done. We give glory to God when we fall at the cross and repent of our sin and we recognize that through Jesus we are set free from our sin. When we run to the cross, God begins to change our desires and it becomes our desire to not misuse the name of

God through what we say or what we do. That is the power that is in the name of Jesus!  
He brings about a change inside of us.

Run to Calvary! Run to the cross! Run to Jesus! He is the source of our praise and he is  
the object of our praise.

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<sup>1</sup>C. S. Lewis *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: A Harvest Book/Harcourt Inc, 1958) 90-99

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Sam Storms “Praise: The Consummation of Joy” November 17, 2013, [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)

<sup>4</sup>J. Douma *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life* (Phillippsburg: P&R Publishing, 1992) 77

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 79

<sup>6</sup>Philip Ryken *Exodus* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005) 579

<sup>7</sup>Robert Schenck *The Ten Words that Will Change A Nation: The Ten Commandments* (Tulsa: Albury, 1999) 53-54

<sup>8</sup>Philip Ryken *Exodus* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005) 585

<sup>9</sup>Erik Raymond “Cancel your trips to Sodom and Sinai” April 11, 2016  
[www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)

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## COMMUNITY GROUPS

### Getting To Know Me Questions

1. Why do you think life is hard? In your opinion, what makes life difficult?
2. Spend some time as a group reciting the Ten Commandments together and rehearsing the Q & A catechism for this week. Open with a time of prayer. Reflecting on the third commandment and the catechism for this week, what do you want to thank God for? What do you want to confess? What do you want to ask God to help you with in living out this commandment?
3. Share what you learned about the third commandment this week.

### Diving Into The Word

4. Reflecting on the observations made by C. S. Lewis on pages 3-4, how does this help you understand what it means to worship and enjoy God? What are some common things in life that you find to be praiseworthy? How do you show your delight for these things? Read Psalm 27:4 and share how you would describe the beauty of the Lord. (Think about the attributes of God.)
5. Read Psalm 106:1-12. Look at this passage and identify some of the reasons why God is to be praised. What do you think it means in verse 8 that God saved them *“for his name’s sake”*? How does this help you understand the commandment to not take the name of the LORD in vain? See also Psalm 8:1 and Matthew 6:9.
6. Read Romans 2:21-24. Share what you learn from this passage about what it means to take the Lord’s name in vain. Use this as an opportunity to discuss the various ways we can take God’s name in vain.
7. To misuse the name of God in many ways is to be casual about the name of God. What are some ways we have become casual with how we use the name of God? Why is this an important issue? How does this apply to living out Colossians 3:17? What steps can you take towards becoming more intentional at giving honor to the name of God?
8. Read Acts 4:12 and Romans 10:9-10. Discuss how these verses remind us of the power of the name of Jesus and how this leads us to worship him.

### Taking It Home

9. What do you want to take with you as a result of your conversation?