

Section: The Law

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Lesson 38**

**Question 47- “You shall not make for yourself an idol”**

Pastor Joshua Kirstine

Tonight I am honored to get to teach on the third commandment and why it’s important.

Look with me at…

**Q47. Why does God give the third commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God?**

So we will respect and honorGod as the worthy and holy One.

If we are honest, many of us have played light with this command along the path of our life maybe because we think, “I know how I feel about God and so my slip of the tongue to mis-use his name in a moment of passion is really not that big of a deal”.

This is a trap for many when it comes to playing light with things that God says are serious.

We excuse our disobedience under the notion, “God knows my heart”.

Jesus says, “…for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” **John 6:45**

I pray if this is your mode of operation regarding the use of the Lord’s name that you would lean in tonight and really do business with what God’s word has to say on the matter.

Others in the room might reason, “a name is just a name and therefore it is pretty inconsequential… this can’t be that big of a deal. I don’t mean any harm by it!”

This is the kind of thinking that makes us find it so permissible when others use the Lord’s name in vain whether in person or in movies or shows we watch.

For many people the general rule is to ***“watch what you say”. Don’t’ use “bad” curse words, maybe cut done the OMG’s*** and if you tend to relate to this approach and you hear the third commandment we might think it is more of a good encouragement to consider then it is a bedrock command of God that is to be taken seriously.

What I find interesting is, while many of you might relate to one of the two more causal approaches to this topic of how we use the name of the Lord.. with a little more thorough investigation our true convictions on the topic maybe it reveal that we are more sensitive or concerned about the seriousness of a name or how it’s used then we first think. Let me show you what I mean….

A famous comedian and a famous actor at one of if not THE biggest award shows in our modern day, The Oscars had a very memorable exchange in 2022. The actor was greatly offended at the jokes the host was giving that involved his wife. And so in anger, the actor screamed out from the audience, demanding that the host “keep his wife’s name out of his mouth”. He then proceeded to get up an assault the host physically.

For months and now year’s this incident has been talked about and it still talked about in a wide variety of circles. The debate centers around the question, **is it permissible for the comedian to reference the wife’s name in a demining way if it is in the name of comedy?**

Or others will say, **is it right that the actor was so angered to hear his wife so publicly humiliated by name?**

If we are honest, somewhere in there is where many of us land.

Many of us can feel lax if God’s name is used in a comedic way or we can feel extra sensitive about the misuse of certain people’s names at times.

**The more you think about it… Maybe a person’s name or how it is used is not as inconsequential as we first think or often treat it.**

Most of us who have had the special roll of naming another human being have treated it as a very high honor and one to take most seriously. I mean, “it is going to be how that person is addressed every time, for the rest of their lives”

I remember I was extra sensitive for many years about not sharing the names I was going to name my children for worry that others might beat me to it. I really wanted their names to be special. \*one of my best friends even punked me over this.

As a culture we are pretty offended when we hear of someone throwing away this big moment in life to name another human being.

Jennifer and I have encountered this a lot doing 8 years of foster care of 48 little children. We had some kids who’s drug addict parents gave some weird names. One of the babies we cared for was named “bibles” and another was named, “SemaJay”. Which we found out later was the mom’s attempt to spell James backwards.

Most of us agree that giving another person a name is a task not to be taken lightly.

We also can be very sensitive and even upset when we hear someone speaking ill of someone we love by name. Deep down inside we want to trust that when people speak of us or someone we love by name that they are respectful and definitely not slandering them.

Finally, we have a lot of inner and sometimes outer reaction when we hear a name. just the mention of their name can stir a wide gamut of negative or positive thoughts and emotions. Let me prove it to you…

Lebron, Biden, Madonna, Bin Laden, Oprah, Timberlake, Trump.. Right?

My point is this, **names matter.** They matter more than we think they do.

Here is the bigger point tonight that leads us back to the third commandment, names matter to God. Especially, His name!!!

**How much does how God’s name is used matter to Him?**

**How serious is God about the misuse of His name?**

**Leviticus 24:16** Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him.

God is dead serious. And so should we be when it comes to the third commandment of our Lord.

To be clear God’s call for death in Lev 24:16 is positive law, specifically “civil law” given to in the Old Testament that is no longer applicable under the new covenant.

That said, the NT scriptures make clear that blasphemy is still extremely serious as it clearly says in multiple places that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit reveals that a person doesn’t belong to God but is condemned to hell for they remain an enemy of God!!

In case a definition helps…

*The term*blasphemy*may be generally defined as “defiant irreverence.”*

*The term can be applied to such sins as cursing God or willfully degrading God.*

*Blasphemy is also attributing some evil to God or denying Him some good that we should attribute to Him.  It is to lie about who He is.*

Church, this is a serious offence and one that we must take most seriously.

So let’s go back to our catechism question and answer…

**Q47. Why does God give the third commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God?**

So we will respect and honorGod as the worthy and holy One.

Two main things I want to help us dive into tonight to further vet this answer….

1. Fundamentally we must rightly understand that God is worthy and Holy
2. Then we must understand what respect and honor for God looks like.
   1. Reverence for Him
   2. Truth speaking about Him

**First, God is worthy and Holy**

The civil law given in Leviticus prescribing the death penalty shows us just how weighty and serious this matter is and more specifically how weighty and serious God is. The General equity of this shows us that we must see how serious God is about the use of his name and or how we represent him with our words. It shows us how careful we need to be in a right thinking and speaking about God.

Directly linked to the third commandment is: ***To not use the Lord’s name in vain.***

**But what does that mean?**

The Webster’s dictionary of 1828 defines ***vain*** as: *Empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance.*

**See with me that this is the opposite of who God is through and through.**

**To connect the Lord with what’s vain is to absolutely lie about who He is!**

Turn with me to **Exodus Ch. 3** and let me show you how God’s name is to be understood!

**Exodus 3:13** Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

What you need to understand about the religious system of that day is there where many gods. “Little g” - little pretender Gods- a god of soil, of fertility, of the sun, of death Moses is asking, **How do I describe you to those who believe in many Gods?** Which God will they think you are?

Now listen to God’s answer….

**Exodus 3:14** God said to Moses, **"I am who I am”.**

This phrase: **“ I am who I am”** is taken from a Hebrew word that means, **“to exist”**

🡪What God is telling Moses is I exist, I am REAL

**In this God is totally slamming the entire man made false god religious system.**

He makes no excuses, no explanation. He is as straight forward and he can be. **I AM!**

Listen to what God says next

**Exodus 3:14b-15** And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” 15 God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Here we see God also refer to himself as… The LORD (all CAPS) L O R D !!!!!!!!!!

LORD here is Four Hebrew consonants, that were so sacred they Jews stopped pronouncing them – The way we pronounce it is “Yahweh”

1rst God calls himself “I AM”

2nd God says you are to call me, “Yahweh”. -Which means **“He IS”**

Church, God’s name demands the highest respect and honor.

🡪It is a name describing His eternal power and unchangeable character.

It is God’s way of declaring his holiness. His set apartness from everything else!!!

Church the last thing that God is …is VAIN. Which again means, “*Empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance.”*

We are to call him, Yahweh! **He Is!**

No matter what you think or have been told. God is!! **I AM who I AM**

In this we must see that…

God’s name is directly related to His character. To whom He is.

And so when we misrepresent or misuse God’s name, we misrepresent His character. We lie about who he is!!

**When we violate this commandment, we are blaspheming and slandering God.**

Throughout scripture the name of the Lord is exalted in the highest way possible:

**Psalm 8:1** O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

**Psalm 29:2** Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

**Acts 4:12** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

**Romans 10:13** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**Philippians 2:10-11** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Church, there is a holy importance of God’s divine name that Scriptures do not let us take lightly or forget! And so we shall not!! Instead we need to have real …

**Reverence for God**

The highest aim of life and creation and all things and even the driving motivation of God **is his eternal GLORY! His worthiness to be praised!!**

**Isaiah 48:11,** God says, He does what He does for His own namesake, and He gives His glory to no one.

**1 Chronicles 29:11 11**Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.

In John’s vision of the throne room of God we see all the elders and choirs singing out…

**"**You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created." **Revelation 4:11**

The question is, **do we show God the reverence he deserves in our everyday life?**

This commandment helps us to truly do business with a every mention of His name. That it would be full of true reverence and aww for there is none like Him in all the earth!!

What about times that are set aside for worshipping God.

Might we be guilty of mailing in our worship of him in a routine or heartless way.

In this we might show up to church or even sing the words to a song but are we really worshipping Him with reverence.

Pastor Kevin DeYoung spoke of this when he says.. “The worst thing that can be phony about us is us. That may be where some of us are. We go to church. We sing the songs. We say the right things. But it’s not reality. Listen, if we are called by the holy name of God, we must not sully that name by living as if our conduct does not concern him or his glory.”

Instead, may we be more mindful to speak of the Lord, to sing to the Lord, to even pray to the Lord with the reverence He is rightly due. For God is unchanging in who He is!! Therefore our reverence for Him should be unchanging!!

“For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed” **Malachi 3:6**

**James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

When we speak of Him or sing to Him or pray to Him with the righteous reverence we not only and honor Him as He is due we also help ourselves have a proper standing and position before him, instead of one that is arrogant or self-serving.

One of the ways, Jesus helps us with this is when he taught the disciples to pray.

**Matthew 6:9** Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

The word hallowed here means “holy”. Which means to be “SET APART” Not common.

Holy, Set apart.. lifted high above be your name!

The first thing Jesus teaches us to do when we pray is say, ***"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."*** The first priority in the heart of Jesus is the height of the name of his Father. The set apartness of our God. This is a great help to us, beloved church.

**Is God set apart from or higher then everything else in your heart?**

\*This is the best way that we can begin to pray.

Humbly approaching His throne! Lost for words in the majesty of His presence

-Recognize who he is and who we are in relation to Him.

-Almost all writings in the bible begin with some form of praise towards God.

-Understanding and proclaiming who He is and what He is doing.

The psalmist models this as well in…

**Psalm 66:17** I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue.

Not only need to show God Proper reverence and honor but we need to….

**Speak the Truth about God**

The third commandment also forbids empty or false oaths.

When you take an oath or make a declaration and swear by God’s name, it must not be a false promise or one you do not keep.

**Leviticus 19:12** “You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.”

We need to avoid the temoptaiton to link a promise ot God that we do not intend to keep or that we do not actually keep. God is serious about our Yes being our Yes.

**Notice with me that it says here in Lev 19:12 to not profane the Name of the Lord.**

**Profane** is to treat something that is sacred as common

To profane the name of the Lord our God is to make him common among creation.

It is to treat something that is utterly sacred with irreverence. It is to make it common among mankind and creation. But the creator is not common among his creation. He is high and above it in every way!

The root word in the word profanity is Profane. It means to take something sacred and make it common. This means, when you say, **“Oh my God”** you are tossing around the Holy name of God and putting it flippantly on the back of whatever ordinary thing you are going through.

Sadly our culture has sinfully, disrespectfully and pridefully made “OMG” an everyday casual slang.

But church, see with me that this is frivolous, sinful and does not respect and honor God as he is.

Church, we must not conform to the world in this. We must not ever use God’s name flippantly.

The only time we should say “O my God” is when we are truly, intentionally, worshipfully calling out to Him in praise, prayer, or song. This is also modeled by the Psalmist…

**Psalm 38:21** Do not forsake me, O Lord! O my God, be not far from me!

**Psalm 40:8** I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

Another modern common way the name of God is misused is to use it as a swear word to illustrate the emotion of disgust. This is when someone says when they are mad or scared… ***“Jesus Christ”.***

It is to use God’s name… not in a thoughtful, respectful reverent way but in service to what is common and frivolous.

**What does it say about the state of our heart if we so casually speak the name of the Lord as a curse word?** We ought to see how small we make God to be when we carelessly and frivolously use His name.

We should also consider humor. Because our culture is also guilty of breaking this command in the name of comedy!

DeYoung speaks on this point as well, “There is no place for using “Jesus Christ” in flippant humor or irreverent sloganeering. I remember seeing a Christian T-shirt, playing off the familiar beer advertising slogan, that said “This blood’s for you.” Someone was too clever for his own good. Or what about our use of Christian words and phrases in sarcastic ways? Like breaking into the “Hallelujah Chorus” when our team scores a touchdown. Or spilling our coffee and saying with a smirk, “Thank you, Jesus.” Or making people laugh with our purposefully ill-timed “Praise the Lamb!” interjection. There are better ways to be silly than with such serious things.”

Paul says, **Ephesians 5:3-4** But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

The saints who belong to Christ need to realize that it is far better to honor the Lord with what we don’t say then it is to get the laughs of others by what we do say! I’ll circle back to this point in a bit but let me show you another layer of this command that is link to truth telling.

The third commandment also prohibits false claims of prophesy.

Those who claimed to speak for God were held to a strict standard of judgment. Look at..

**Deuteronomy 18:20** “But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.

**Phil Ryken** says, “A more serious way to break the third commandment is by using God’s name to advance our own agenda. Some Christians say, “The Lord told me to do this.” Or worse, they say, “The Lord told me to tell you to do this.” This is false prophecy! God has already said whatever he needs to say to us in his Word. Of course, there is also an inward leading of the Holy Spirit. But this is only an inward leading, and it should not be misrepresented as an authoritative word from God.”

Church, this is an all too common way that many Christians speak that is a breaking of the third commandment. You can’t say, "We've prayed about this and God has provided an open door. God wants us to have this or to do that.”

What we can say is, "We've sought the Lord and spent a lot of time researching all the options. And we all feel that this is the right move for this or that and we think God will be honored if we do this or that.” The difference between the two speeches is subtle but significant.

The third commandment requires that we speak the truth about who God is and how he works.

Theology matters so that we can obey the third commandment.

Because when we speak ignorantly or when we promote heresy we are speaking lies about who God is and what He has done or commanded. We show proper reverence to God by speaking what is true about God.

This is why we don’t do church in a way where we just invite everyone to share what they think a passage of scripture means or to ask them who God is to them like it has some kind of validity or help to others. It doesn’t!

Man’s ideas of who God is will be sinfully limited and or self-serving. No, instead we must radically and faithfully submit ourselves to God’s word so that we speak to ourselves, to others and to our children what is true about God and how he works!!

The Lord has been gracious to us to give us His written word and so we have no excuse to not know what is true about God as He has revealed himself to us. May we take more seriously then we do to grow in sound biblical theology so that we testify the truth about God and do not testify falsely about him!!!

**Q47. Why does God give the third commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God?**

So we will respect and honorGod as the worthy and holy One.

We respect and honor God by speaking what is true of him and by not diminishing him by making his name common or misusing it. For God is Holy and Set apart from all things in creation. Nothing is like God!!!

Church, our words matter!!!

**Our words tell on the state of our heart.**

They reveal who we belong to and what we really care about.

James was clear to say in **James 1:26** “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.”

True faith (or what James calls “pure religion”) is lived out in active and lasting obedience not only with our actions but with our words.

Church: one of the biggest ways you honor God with your life is to use your tongue for His glory and not for your flesh or the worlds agenda.

James uses the word, “bridle” here to describe how we are to steward our tongue or our words.

A bridle is a tool used to control an animal and to dictate his direction.

So James is trying to emphasize that both control and direction of our tongue or our words is a critical part of doing what God has given us in his word. Of living out our faith and putting it to work in an ongoing way that Honors and makes much of God.

James says, that their religion ( their worship or devotion to God) is worthless. WOW.

That is a huge indictment. This should be very sobering for many who hear it. **WHY?** Because all to many people are guilty of thinking they are good with God, thinking they are a part of his eternal family and the church, but completely oblivious to the unbridled nature of their tongue thereby reveling the unbridled reality of their spiritual heart.

Jesus himself will emphasize in **Matthew 15:18** that “what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.”

Church: **Our words matter.**

They are an active part of our testimony of who we belong to.

To say you love God but then to use your mouth to curse others or to use the name of the Lod in vane is to be a hypocrite.

**Church, if you are saved and set free form your enslavement to sin and now love in the power of the Holy Spirit in the newness of Life Jesus bought for you in God’s grace, then you have no excuse to lazily, selfishly speak in a filthy, crude way but instead we are to speak form the spring of living water that runs within us that is Jesus Christ.**

If Christ is my Lord and my treasure and my identity, then I will NOT need to satisfy my flesh to cut down others or crack crude jokes to get a laugh or use the Lord’s name in vain. These are the ways of sin and the flesh in order to lift oneself up.

If you are a new Christian who grew up in a home of debauchery or lived many years in the ways of wicked men, then your mouth and your words should on a road of true sanctification as you grow in God whereby you are seeing real evidence of maturity and God honoring fruit.

If you are mature in your faith but still speak words that curse or glorify creation or even sin then you need to take real inventory today. James says to you, **that your religion ( your worship of God) is worthless.**

So, I need to ask you tonight: **Have you been lazy with the words that come out of your mouth? Have you been self-justified when angry to speak in ways that do not honor God?**

**Are there still times were you curse others or use words inappropriately or profane the Lord’s name by tossing it to and fro?**

Maybe you speak certain words that you shouldn’t when you get angry or frustrated.

Brother/Sister, please see that anger or frustration is not an excuse for words that dishonor God ever.

It is in those moments that our abiding in Christ is to go to the best work. The real measure of who our heart belongs to will be shown in the hardest circumstances not the easiest ones.

May we truly confess this as sin and take up a new course in light of God’s clear word and will for us.

**May Christ is in us** bring about new convictions and new responses to hardship or disappointment whereby we don’t turn to be vengeful or hateful to others with our words. May we grow in our respect and reverence for the Lord and may any use of his name be handled oh so carefully and never flippantly!

I praise God for His good work in so many of us to truly refine and reform our minds and heart and motives.

Our words have a testimony. When we speak righteously and head the third commandment and these other NT commands then our words will point people rightly to God. They will speak of His grace and the gospel. They will display a sanctified life. This testimony has to start with a reverent, honest and respectful way we speak of God and represent Christ in our daily testimony.

**The Westminster Larger Catechism** says, “The third commandment requires, That the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing; by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others.”

Scripture summarizes this commandment well, look to **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.

When we know Christ, when Christ is at work in us, it produces something very different.

It produces thankfulness for all that God is and has done despite our circumstances.

Paul said it similarly this way when teaching on what comes out of our mouths…

**Ephesians 5:4** Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, **but instead let there be thanksgiving.**

This is the Proper testimony for the saints who belong to Christ.

Words and witness that are filled with thanksgiving for all that we have received in Christ.

I want to close with some words that our brother in Christ, Scott Waterman, shared with us the last time he taught on this subject as it was a great encouragement to me and I pray it is to you as well.. .

*Studying these commandments can be empowering for some people as they may be seeing truth that they had previously never considered. But, for others, studying these commandments can be a convicting and difficult pill to swallow. Perhaps you are seeing all manner of sin which you have blindly neglected for a lifetime. I would like to speak to the later group for a moment. My aim is to encourage you.*

*Brothers and Sisters remember the gospel. Remember that Christ paid the price for your sin. If you are His, you are forgiven! Does that mean that you ought to sin freely and abundantly, no. But, if any time we are caught in a transgression we have an opportunity to look to Christ and glory in the forgiveness and mercy of God through the atonement.*

*We must see that we are no longer slaves to sin. We must echo Paul’s words in Romans 8:15: For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The only way to break the bond of sin is to look to Christ. We may be overwhelmed in the moment by the gross darkness that is exposed by Biblical light, but that reality should not push us to hide in our flesh. No, we should seek to bring brothers and sisters around us who can help us seek the Lord together and pray for us. Don’t do this alone!*

*My prayer for us this evening, as we go to our groups, is that you would strive to honor the Lord in your words by confessing your sin. Confess the ways by which you have violated this commandment and praise Him for His mercy and grace in the face of your heinous sin.*

**Q47. Why does God give the third commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God?**

So we will respect and honorGod as the worthy and holy One.

Let’s pray